

Application Form

Applicant organisation:

UnitedDiversity LLP

Contact person (name and position):

Josef Davies-Coates, Founder, UnitedDiversity LLP

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Name of venture/proposal (if different from name of applicant organisation):

Resilient Communities Fund

Venture/proposal website address (if applicable)

Proposal summary: Describe the location, nature and purpose of your proposal, and the demographic profile of the community it will serve. How much money are you planning to raise and from how many investors? What will the money be used for? What timescales are you working to? (Max. 200 words)

The purpose of Resilient Communities Fund is to:

- Purchase land for ecological/ community use (e.g community supported agriculture, affordable sustainable housing).
- Finance infrastructure projects (e.g. renewable energy) on land purchased and on existing ecovillages etc.
- Raise the profile of, and invest in, other projects working towards similar goals.

Ecovillagers, transitioners, permaculturalists and all others working toward a resilient future will be encouraged to pool 1% of their income into the Fund.

By taking full advantage of social media tools we will tap into the wealth of networks and create a very large pot of money.

We will harness the wisdom of crowds by inviting members to submit, discuss, refine, rate and vote on proposals using a web platform designed to enable large scale participative decision making.

Its like MyFootballClub.co.uk for land and infrastructure.

Our initial target is to quickly (6-12 months) raise £25,000 to invest in an existing IPS issuing shares (e.g. Ecological Land Coopeartive, Radical Routes, Energy4all).

This will demonstrate how effective aggregating many small investments into larger ones can be, take advantage of the fact that only other IPSs can invest more than £20,000, and make our support for the wider IPS sector clear.

Proposal team: Describe the nature and composition of your team, stating their role (directors, employees, advisers etc), competencies and track record in areas relevant to the proposal. If you are an established organisation, please also describe your legal form, membership and governance structure. (Max. 400 words)

From United Diversity LLP (a small co-opeartive with 3 members, governed by rough consensus):

- **Josef Davies-Coates**, founder and partner United Diversity LLP.
I am coordinator of this project. I've been described by others as both a "Fountain of Knowledge" and a "One man serendipity machine" because I'm one of those people who seems to know everyone and everything. This is obviously far from the truth, but my deep knowledge of social networking and social media tools, together with my thirst for knowledge, do allow me to make a very useful contributions in many many social change networks. Professionally I am a social media consultant. I also help find the right people for social change jobs, sell books, develop websites and have numerous small retainers for generally being a useful person to have around. I'm a steward member of the Ecological Land Cooperative, play an active role in Transition Network's Web Project, have recently completed an intensive 3 month Sustainable Land Use course and have a Permaculture Design Certificate.
- **Tom Salfield**, partner United Diversity LLP, and head of Hub World Tech Team.
Tom read Bsc Economics and Philosophy at LSE before completing a Msc in Computer Science at Imperial College London. He worked with New Economics Foundation and AccountAbility on policy issues, before joining Via3.net as lead Web Developer. He now heads up the Tech Team for Hub World <http://www.the-hub.net> who globally support a network of over 3000 social entrepreneur members by providing much needed infrastructure; coworking spaces in cities around the world and online tools for collaboration.

Others:

- **Oliver Sylvester-Bradley**, Marketing Manager, solarcentury. Oli has a BA in Sustainable Product Design from St Martins and a Msc Advanced Architecture and Energy Studies with the Centre for Alternative Technology. Formerly a Web Design and Sustainability consultant Oli joined United Diversity as partner before becoming Market Manager at solarcentury 4 years ago (the UK's largest renewable energy company). Few people know better how to market renewable energy, or have as deep a knowledge of the renewables industry, as Oli.
- **Peter Brownell**, founder Drupal.org.uk, CTO School of Everything. Pete is highly skilled web developer who has been an active supporter of this project since its inception. He is one of the most experienced Drupal web developers in the UK and brings a wealth of web development expertise to the project.

The community: Describe the community you want to engage as investors. What evidence do you have that this community will invest in your venture? What social return are you offering investors? (Max. 400 words)

We will engage the following communities of interest:

- **Ecovillagers**
There are numerous ecovillage projects in England (e.g. Hockerton Housing Project, BedZed Ecovillage), dozens in the UK and 100s globally. Ecovillagers have long been pioneers willing to try new things. Many are already pioneering community investment (e.g. Norway's Camphill Communities have a pension scheme through which members invest in ecovillage developments, Damanhur in Italy has a similar fund for property development, and Ekopia in Findhorn has raised funds for wind turbines and a village shop). As part of NextGEN (Next Generation of Global Ecovillage Network) I'm helping to organise a gathering of "Students of Sustainability" (SOS) in a German ecovillage this July. My co-organisers are excited about the possibilities of the Resilient Communities Fund.
- **Transitioners**
There are already over 90 "official" Transition communities in England with 100s at an earlier stage of development. Globally there 100s of official initiatives and 1000s of "mullers". The purpose of Transition initiatives is to build local resilience and some have already started experimenting with crowdfunding (e.g. Transition Hackney in London). Transition also explicitly builds upon permaculture principles...
- **Permaculturalists**
Since the term "permaculture" was coined in the early 1970s 1000s of people worldwide have completed a Permaculture Design Course (PDC) and learnt the importance of sustainable land use and low energy design. The Resilient Communities Fund is a natural fit for the permaculture mindset, as demonstrated by the enthusiasm for the idea by all my fellow students on the PDC I recently completed.
- **Others working toward a resilient future**
Worldwide there are millions of people who understand the need to build resilient communities. We are already deeply rooted in these networks and can reach out to them using social media tools.

The evidence people are willing to invest in ventures like this; on the basis on one presentation I gave about the “Commons Creation Fund” (a more informal incarnation of this project) a dozen people signed up and began pooling £5/month into our Triodos savings account. We have since acquired some land in Spain and a load of solar panels; the Ecological Land Cooperative were able to quickly raise £100k; share issues for renewable energy developments are routinely over subscribed.

The social return is clear: the chance for your community to flourish in uncertain times, and for your grandchildren to inhabit a liveable world.

Business model: Describe the trading activities and principal sources of revenue for the venture. What profits or losses are forecast for the venture? What financial return are you offering investors? What evidence is there that this enterprise will be sustainable? (Max. 400 words)

This is where we need the most support and hence why we are apply for support as part of the Community Share programme.

Whilst it is clear there is a market for sustainable food and housing, and an almost limitless demand for energy, nitty gritty business planning is sadly not our forte. Our strengths are in Internet technologies and marketing.

This is in part why we believe the Resilient Communities Fund should initially invest in other financially sound and socially beneficial enterprises, as chosen by our members using our proposed collaborative decision making platform, i.e. initially members will only be invited to propose existing IPSs whom they think we should fund, but in time we plan to open it up to other land and infrastructure projects too.

In time, our revenues will come from:

- Dividends received from investments in others IPSs
- Interest on infrastructure loans we make to other land projects
- Income from the generation and sale of renewable energy (a UK “feed in tariff” is due to be introduced next April)
- Rental/ sales income on land we collectively own that we rent/ lease out for ecological uses (much like Ecological Land Cooperative) and on housing we develop on land we own.

How exactly we do this needs to be worked out in A LOT more detail, but we believe our plans are financially feasible. We think land and infrastructure have always been good investments because everyone needs food, housing and energy.

Capital finance plan: How much capital are you seeking to raise? Are you planning to offer shares or bonds? What legal form do you think you will use? Will the offer be time-bound or open-ended? What other types and sources of capital are you targeting? (Max. 400 words)

Having conducted in depth research into all the legal forms available, it would appear that a Community Benefit Society IPS is most suitable for this project.

Will issue withdrawable shares and our Initial target is to raise £25,000 in the first 6-12 months. This will likely be invested in an existing Industrial Provident Society with similar goals (e.g. Ecological Land Cooperative, Energy4all)

Investment in the Resilient Communities Fund will be an open-ended offer and over time is it hoped that we will become the largest and most successful IPS, with 10,000s of members worldwide all investing 1% of their income into the Fund.

This will enable us to build up a substantial pot of money to invest in resilience building projects that will help communities deal with the challenges of climate, energy and economic uncertainty (i.e. in excess of £1 million, but hopefully considerably more considering the scale of the task at hand).

Our main focus will be on increasing membership and raising money from our networks, but where possible we will also seek to leverage our member's investment to attract further capital investment via Government funds and charitable foundations (e.g. Tudor Trust and Esmee Fairburn's Community Land Trust Fund etc).

Special reasons for supporting your proposal: What is special about your proposal? Summarise why you think your venture will be a good example for us to study. (Max. 200 words)

Its time to realise the Internet's potential to crowdfund real social change.

Its time to raise the profile of the many existing community investment projects already doing great work.

Most of these projects don't even have a good website, let alone take full advantage of the power of social media. Many also have a prohibitively high minimum investment.

By applying our Internet and Marketing expertise to community investment we will demonstrate:

- The possibility of raising large amounts of money by aggregating many of small amounts
- The potential to empower large numbers of people with real decision making power using online decision making tools.

We believe the Resilient Communities Fund's work in this area will be relevant to cooperatives and communities everywhere.

I / we agree to abide by the criteria as set out in the application form and in particular, Section 4 Research Programme

Signature: Josef Davies-Coates Date: May 30th 2009