



KIBBUTZ LOTAN WINS 2006 ECOVILLAGE EXCELLENCE AWARD



Ecological building work underway at Kibbutz Lotan, Israel.

Kibbutz Lotan won the prestigious 2006 Ecovillage Excellence Award with the citation making special mention of its work promoting ecological building, waste management and environmental education; and promoting sustainability through the building of bridges between different ethnic groups in Israel.

Lotan runs peace camps and eco-building workshops, co-operating closely with a number of organisations, including Friends of the Earth of the Middle East and Bustan, a partnership of

Jewish and Arab eco-builders, architects, academics and farmers who promote social and environmental justice in Israel/Palestine. The work is inspired by the Jewish concept of Tikkun Olam (world mending and transformation).

The Italian ecovillage of Bagnaia was also made special mention of, celebrating its work in hosting Israeli-Palestinian peace camps and in supporting the Italian ecovillage network (RIVE) that celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2006.

It's Official! Ecovillages Do Have Lower Eco-footprints

Preliminary results from the ecological footprint study for the Findhorn Foundation community confirm what we have guessed for some time – that ecovillages tread significantly more lightly on the Earth than more conventional communities.

The study found that Findhorn residents have, on average, a footprint of 2.78 hectares, a little over half the national average. When the figures are adjusted to take into account the three new wind turbines recently installed that make Findhorn a net energy exporter – it is anticipated that Findhorn's footprint will be found to be less than half the national average.

Of special interest is the footprint for food, which is 35% of the national average (Findhorn has the UK's oldest and largest organic community-supported agriculture scheme) and 'home and energy', which is 27% of the national average as Findhorn benefits from having a growing number of highly energy-efficient houses.

Findhorn also scored well in terms of 'consumables' –



An evocative view of Findhorn

personal possessions – with a footprint only 44% of the national average.

'This is the lowest footprint I am aware of in any community in the industrialised world', said Jonathan Dawson who co-ordinated the study. 'What's more, we have ecovillages in Europe that have a lower footprint than Findhorn.'

For details, contact Jonathan jonathan@gen-europe.org

Estonian Ecovillage Success



One of the stalls in Estonia

A 3-day meeting on ecovillages in the Estonian community of Lilleoru in early June was declared a major success.

Jointly funded by the EC and the British Council, the meeting brought together around 150 people from across Estonia together with international guests Ross and Hildur Jackson (Gaia Trust) and Jonathan Dawson (co-Executive Secretary, GEN-Europe). Seven existing and emerging ecovillage initiatives gave presentations on their projects and the meeting laid the foundations for the emergence of an Estonian ecovillage network.

For further details, contact Ave Oit ave@loodusjoud.ee

Straw Bale Building Is Legalised In Germany

Following several years of promotion and campaigning work on the part of Sieben Linden ecovillage, the planning legislation in Germany has been amended to legalise the building of houses with straw bales. As a result, those wishing to build straw bale dwellings will no longer have to go through the long, complex and expensive process of seeking special permission.

The Sieben Linden ecovillage has built numerous straw bale houses, including Europe's largest straw bale building.

View details at www.fasba.de or email club99@siebenlinden.de



Happy German strawbale builders celebrate their good news!

NEWS IN BRIEF

TAMERA OFFERS PEACE JOURNALISM FORUM

Leila Dregger will facilitate a Peace Journalism Forum within the context of the International Summer University 2006 at Tamera, Portugal (31 July – 10 August). If you are a journalist interested in joining the course, or want to participate in the International Summer University please email: SU2006@tamera.org

LAMMAS ECOVILLAGE PROJECT

The Pembrokeshire based ecovillage project, Lammas, has been offered some land next to the village of Glandwr, Pembrokeshire. The plot is 175 acres of farmland with woodland – an ideal location for the project.

Lammas proposes a new build permaculture development of 30-45 dwellings, centred on a village green. They say the dwellings will merge with the surrounding environment, will be innovative and earthy, and use the latest environmental technologies combined with local natural materials.

For more information, visit www.ruralrenewal.co.uk

URBAN REGENERATION

The first urban application of the Gaia Education Ecovillage Design curriculum has been undertaken at the newly-founded University for Environment and Peace Culture (UMAPAZ) in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The event was organised by two urban ecovillage initiatives in Sao Paulo (Ecovila Sao Paulo, and Ecobairro) and involved 101 participants, including architects, urban planners, directors of public parks, environmental educators, neighbourhood leaders and business people.

The recently-created EDE curriculum is to be taught in many different contexts around the world.

For more details, contact meyeast@findhorn.org

GAIA University Launches Euro Programmes

Following a very successful launch in May and June of its first MSc, Graduate Diploma and BSc degrees at the Ecovillage Training Center in Tennessee, USA, Gaia University is set to launch its first European programmes.

Declan Kennedy, former Chairperson of the GEN Board and now Chair of the Gaia University International Advisory Board, has been the lead organizer for the European Gaia U residential intensives to be held at Lebengarten Ecovillage from 18 August - 3 September of this year.

The programme includes an Introductory Workshop (18-21

August) for people who would like to learn more about how the unique Gaia U system can benefit those involved in ecovillage, permaculture, bioregional and holistic health work by accrediting their knowledge and skills using a self-directed, action learning methodology.

Degree programs on offer are an MSc and Graduate Diploma in the Regional Development of Gaia University and an Open Topic MSc and Graduate Diploma in any field of sustainability/regeneration/world change.

For full information contact info@gaiainiversity.org or view www.gaiainiversity.org

Monte Cerro Experiment Launched



Having fun cleaning the colourful toilets at Tamera's Monte Cerro.

Finally, after several years of planning and preparation, Tamera's Monte Cerro experiment was launched on 1 May 2006.

For the next three years up to 200 participants from different parts of the world will study the development of peace villages and the social and spiritual foundations for a non-violent culture of peace. So far, 170 participants and applicants have taken up studies at the Monte Cerro Peace Research Centre. Two of the students are of Arabic origin and come from Israel.

Three inhabitants of the Columbian peace village San José de Apartadó have come to learn about solar architecture and to talk about further co-operation with Tamera.

The people of their village are committed to live a non-violent life in the midst of a civil war. One of their leaders, Giraldo Tuberquia, said: "It is good to know that places like Tamera exist, where eyes are not shut to what is happening to farmers in Columbia. This gives us hope".

The three-year training is led by the first graduates of the Tamera Peace School. Other teachers will include the Vietnamese Zen monk, Claude Anshin Thomas, professor of clay architecture at the University of Kassel; Gernot Minke; Arun Gandhi, the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi; and Max Lindegger, one of the world's leading permaculture experts.

For further details contact amelie.Weimar.igf@tamera

GEN At Athens Forum

GEN-Europe was represented at this year's European Social Forum in Athens in early May in the shape of Executive Secretary, Jonathan Dawson, ZEGG community member Zisula Cordaches and her sister, Irini, who lives in Athens.



GEN busy at Athens forum.

As often happens at events such as this, which are often to be strong on rhetoric and protest, participants proved very hungry for the positive and grounded ecovillage message. There was hardly a moment during the three-day event when people were not queuing up at the GEN-Europe exhibition stand, seeking information and inspiration on how to create ecovillages.

GEN-Europe hosted three workshops in one day – one in the morning where Jonathan gave a presentation on the ecovillage experience worldwide; a second in the afternoon addressed by Zisula on ZEGG; and a third in the evening discussing the creation of ecovillages in Greece. These gatherings were never less than full (the rooms allocated for these workshops had a capacity of around 50 people) and the evening session had people spilling out into the corridor.

"There is a huge level of interest in the potential of ecovillages to respond to some of the more serious social and ecological problems facing Greece" said GEN-Europe Executive Secretary, Jonathan Dawson. "We wish our Greek colleagues well in establishing the first ecovillages in this beautiful country".

For further details, please contact Jonathan at jonathan@gen-europe.org