



Living Routes Goes Carbon Neutral

Living Routes, along with its partner, the University of Mass-Amherst (Massachusetts, USA), is to run college programmes based in ecovillages around the world.

Living Routes has become the first overseas study organisation in America to become carbon neutral by measuring, reducing, and offsetting their greenhouse gas emissions.

During 2006, after reducing their emissions as much as possible (mainly through energy saving measures, using recycled materials, and encouraging car pooling and telecommuting), Living Routes' office staff and students still generated a total of 218 metric tonnes of CO₂ (97% of which was due to air travel). But, these emissions were then 'offset' by purchasing 12 solar cookers for a Senegalese

ecovillage to install, and by planting trees, mostly by Living Routes students during their programmes.

Living Routes is proud to be a pioneer in this quickly evolving and somewhat controversial field and believes these efforts help educate and empower students, support local ecosystems and economies, facilitate the transition to a post-oil economy, and ultimately help make our planet safe and healthy for future generations. (See *letter on Letters page 53 for an African perspective on tourism and off-setting initiatives.*)

For more information on this project view the excellent Living Routes website, as it explains how they calculate and monitor their emissions: www.livingroutes.org/about/



Members of a Senegalese ecovillage installing their solar cookers.

Findhorn Welcomes Vietnamese Delegation



The Vietnamese Ministry of Planning and Investment on their visit.

A delegation of 21 senior ministers and government officials from Vietnam had the opportunity to witness best practice at Findhorn Ecovillage in mid-March 2007. The visit, hosted by CIFAL Findhorn, was part of a two-week fact finding mission by a delegation from the Vietnamese Ministry of Planning and Investment.

The purpose of the UK trip was to exchange experiences on policies and strategies to ensure sustainable growth and socio-economic development in less advantaged rural areas; including the management of opportunities and impacts of increasing globalisation for rural communities.

At Findhorn, the delegation observed the best examples of integrated planning, with a view

to examining the potential for replicating the model in Vietnam. They were particularly interested in Findhorn's Wind Park – which is a showcase of the community's ownership of electricity generated from renewable sources.

May East, CEO of CIFAL Findhorn, said: "The party was interested to hear that Findhorn Wind Park is a net exporter of electricity. Based in a brown field site adjacent to a disused runway and aircraft storage area at RAF Kinloss, the Wind Park has a total capacity of 750kW and is a significant contributor to the low ecological footprint at the ecovillage.

May East accepted an invitation to undertake a reciprocal visit to Korea.

For further details, contact: cifalfindhorn@findho

Ekosense Takes Root In Croatia

A new initiative, the Ekosense Foundation, has been set up to promote a culture of sustainable living in Croatia.

The Foundation is the brainchild of 25 people living in Holland, the US, the UK, Bosnia, Slovenia and Croatia. It has launched six projects including a hazelnut farm, a renovated traditional Croatian stone lodge, an eco-tourism project and a 400ha

farm that is to be converted to permacultural production.

The group hopes to create a series of eco-centres in Croatia that will serve as demonstration and teaching centres. Already, two eco-centres are in operation and the group plans to build a further three in other parts of Croatia.

For information, contact: peter@scheltus.nl



Ecovillage Family Gathers In Thailand



Every continent was represented at the Gaia Education gathering.

Two gatherings at the Wongsanit Ashram, Thailand, in February 2007 brought together senior members of the ecovillage family from every continent.

This was a mid-term review for the Gaia Education project designing a curriculum based on the global ecovillage experience. This has been endorsed by UNITAR (United Nations Institute for Research and Development) and accepted as a contribution to UNESCO's UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

The 26 participants from 13 different countries heard from those who have already taught this curriculum in various contexts in Australia, Brazil, Israel,

Mexico, Portugal, Scotland, Sri Lanka and the US. Plans were agreed to teach further courses in Argentina, Bolivia, India and Thailand.

This was followed by a meeting of the Board of GEN. Wide-ranging discussions were held on the challenges and opportunities presented to the ecovillage family by Peak Oil and Climate Change and several new projects, including the making of a film on ecovillages. The provision of additional support to NextGEN (GE's new Youth Council) was also approved.

Contact: mayeast@findhorn.org regarding Gaia, and jonathan@gen-europe.org for GEN.

Women's Initiative

Auroville ecovillage in southern India has launched an initiative to provide opportunities for poor women to create and market products made from recycled materials.

WELL (Women's Empowerment through Local Livelihood), provides training to convert waste papers into a variety of papier-mâché items.

The women are trained at Auroville's Industrial Zone where they also take classes in yoga, health care and English.

The initiative is a year old and two independent village-level units have been set up, each providing employment for around 10 women. The aim is to have around 100 women trained and operating their own businesses.

For further information see: www.wellpaper@auroville.org

Asian Ecovillage

Wongsanit Ashram, near Bangkok, is working on two initiatives to strengthen the ecovillage movement in Asia.

First, it is undertaking a survey to build up a database of ecovillages in the region. It plans to publish an ecovillage network directory (along the lines of *Eurotopia* and *Diggers and Dreamers*) as well as putting the information on the web.

In parallel, and as a way of boosting the educational capacity of the Asian network, the Ashram is inviting ecovillagers and ecovillage enthusiasts from across the region to its first Ecovillage Design Education course in December 2007, followed by a Training of Trainers course.

See: www.sulak-sivaraksa.org or contact: ecovillage@semsikkha.org

Permaculture Centre Plans For UK Ecovillage

The Marda Permaculture Training Centre (www.thefarm.org/charities/i4at/marda), is proving to be an ideal location for a training centre in Palestine.

The centre is to train people in each of the surrounding villages to collect and recycle their own rainwater for drinking and gardening, to grow productive home gardens, and to provide for more of their energy needs by utilising solar ovens and learning energy-efficiency strategies.

Marda has a population of 2,000. It is surrounded by 22 other Palestinian villages and bordered by Israeli settlements. The unemployment rate is 95%, water sources are diverted by Israel, and communal land for farming and olive harvest, in use by the Palestinian people for thousands of years, has been consistently destroyed or threatened by Israeli forces. The cost for gas and electricity is high and rising.

Last July the women of Bustan, an Israeli-based organisation, met for the first time in Marda with Murad and the Marda Women's Council to discuss their vision for the Centre. Since that time, with only \$4,500 spent so far and a lot of volunteer time, they have produced a documentary on the project, acquired a greenhouse nursery for the Centre garden, built a fence around the site with Israeli/Palestinian labour, created educational brochures and published articles about the project, produced a permaculture design plan for the site, and begun a women's workshop.

As well as their own initiatives, they have fostered a network of support from across the globe, including:

- [Global Village Institute, www.thefarm.org/charities/gvi.html](http://www.thefarm.org/charities/gvi.html)
- [Bustan, www.bustan.org](http://www.bustan.org)
- [International Women's Peace Service, www.iwps-pal.org](http://www.iwps-pal.org)
- [Galilee Restoration Project, www.awish.net/Asia/galilee](http://www.awish.net/Asia/galilee)
- [Kibbutz Lotan, www.kibbutzlotan.com](http://www.kibbutzlotan.com)
- [Global Ecovillage Network, http://gen.ecovillage.org](http://gen.ecovillage.org)
- [Starhawk, www.starhawk.org](http://www.starhawk.org)
- [Julie Firth, www.rosneath.com.au/ipc6/ch02/firth/index.html](http://www.rosneath.com.au/ipc6/ch02/firth/index.html)

Ambitious plans for an ecovillage on the site of a former cement works in Weardale, County Durham, are expected to be ready for approval in the autumn of 2007. And, it is hoped that the Eastgate Renewable Energy Village (www.weardale-works.co.uk) will be given the green light by the end of 2008.

Weardale Task Force has appointed a team of consultants, who are preparing a masterplan to transform the site. It is anticipated that the scheme, which has the backing of many local people, will create at least 350 sustainable jobs, including opportunities for new and existing businesses.

John Topliss, of the Weardale Task Force, said: "The appointment of the team of specialist consultants is crucial in bringing the whole project a step closer. It ensures we will be able to meet the stringent requirements of producing a planning application package, expected this autumn. We have set out to create something special – a living, working, learning and leisure environment to provide much needed economic regeneration and sustainable jobs."

The site will utilise five forms of land-based renewable energy: hydro, geothermal, wind, solar and biomass. A hot springs spa is also part of the proposed development. As well as housing and business accommodation, the village will include a hotel, an education centre and many activities and tourist attractions.

SUBMISSIONS

DEADLINE
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To contribute to the Global
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