



Urban Agenda Platform

The global platform for sharing progress, action and knowledge on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve sustainable urban development.

Findhorn Ecovillage

Region	Europe and Central Asia
Award Scheme	Dubai International Award
Start Year	2017
Sustainable Development Goals	Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Summary

The Findhorn Foundation, since 1962 internationally known for its experiment with new models for holistic and sustainable living, is today at the heart of the largest single intentional community in the UK. Founded in an aging caravan park in the Northeast of Scotland, the Findhorn Foundation community has grown into a major center of adult education welcoming over 14,000 visitors a year from over 50 countries.

Background and Objective

The motivation for developing the Ecovillage Project was to research and demonstrate community-led solutions to the problems of how to live sustainable; using appropriate technologies, local materials, local know how to provide solutions that were affordable and low carbon. The intention was to create a model for sustainable living where the needs of human settlements and of nature were integrated. Cooperation and co-creation with nature was a major aspect of the Community's work. From its earliest days it became well known for its beautiful gardens grown in adverse and unlikely conditions on the sand dunes of the Findhorn peninsula. Much emphasis was put on creating a harmonious relationship with nature, though much of the work was done on ornamental gardens. The local area was economically depressed with a high rate of unemployment, lack of opportunities and economic diversity. The Findhorn community was based on volunteer work in exchange for food and accommodation. The main income for the community came from the promotion of holistic educational workshops and training. In the early 1980's most of the members of the community were living in caravans and mobile homes: very unecological, unhealthy and substandard dwellings. The community was founded in a caravan park and as the community didn't own the land there was no alternative. In terms of energy, the fuels used were coal, oil, electricity and wood. Costs were high because of lack of insulation in caravans and the dependence on fossil fuels. The prospect of the transformation of the caravan park into a model ecovillage is what motivated the community to undertake a worldwide fundraising effort that resulted in the purchase of the Park. In terms of social structure a very strong community had evolved that provided a rich and varied experience. Residents were coming from over twenty-five countries which lead to an exciting and stimulating multi-cultural experience. The challenge was to preserve and enhance this community spirit whilst redeveloping the physical and economic infrastructure.

Actions and Implementation

What problems were faced implementing the initiative? How were they overcome? Major problems in the process of implementing the Eco-Village concepts were access to funds and technical resources. Use of largely unskilled volunteer labour both for design and building often resulted in time and cost overruns. The problems of sufficient funding has partially been overcome through allowing private investment and ownership of individual properties. Labour problems have been overcome by education, training and through the use of more professionally trained personnel from the outset. Which important problems remain? The problem which remains is financial resources as we enter the second phase of the Eco-Village Project. We intend to erect two additional wind generators; continue to replace caravans with eco-houses (27 have been replaced and 95 remain); develop a water recycling system for use of treated water from the 'Living Machine'; develop additional land for housing and business initiatives; improve community facilities and infrastructure generally.

Outcomes and Impacts

How was the integration of the social, economic, environmental and cultural elements of sustainability achieved? Due to the circular and holistic nature of the community, the integration of the social, economic, environmental and cultural elements of sustainability were directly demonstrated, experienced and embodied within the community life. The 'human scale' or 'localization' of technologies employed made community participation and involvement an integral part of the process of implementation. The community has been involved in the erection of new buildings, the wind turbine and other physical projects as well as involved with the development of community policy, experiments with pay and remuneration, festivals and celebrations, decision making around governance and leadership. The key elements of sustainability at the community level have all been worked with and explored by those



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most directly affected and involved in the experiment. How were resources leveraged? Human resources have largely been leveraged by encouraging volunteer participation by outside groups and organisations from the UK and abroad. Individuals were engaged through the forming of a network of supporters called 'Stewards' that make regular financial contributions and are kept informed through newsletters. Financial resources were also mobilised through professional fundraising campaigns as well as small ad hoc community fundraising events. Private investment has been encouraged as well as soft loans that has provided some capital for community projects. How was cost-recovery employed? With some initiatives, as the erection of a wind turbine, business plans were drawn up and private companies established to carry out the projects. Loans were repaid with accrued income from operating. Other projects such as replacing caravans with ecological, energy-efficient houses have a long cost recovery but an immediate benefit in improving quality of life. How is dependence on external resources addressed? While much of our resources have been generated from within the community there is still a need for external funding and human resources to be tapped. We see this as a short term problem as the Eco-Village economy is growing and becoming more able to generate the funds necessary for further development and next steps for implementation of our stated goals. Is there a time-line for achieving self-sufficiency? We would hope that within ten years to have 90% of our energy from renewable sources; grow 80-90% of our fresh food; eliminate all residential caravans and replace with eco-housing; develop a diverse and healthy economic base for supporting residents within the Project. If loans are involved, how are they being repaid? Repayment of capital varies from project to project and is dependent on the continued success as a whole of the community as a whole.

Gender and Social Inclusivity

The Findhorn Ecovillage is a synthesis of some of the very best of current thinking on sustainable human settlements. It is a constantly evolving model used as learning environment by a number of university and school groups as well as by professional organisations and municipalities worldwide. It is true to say that many hundreds of groups and communities have based their organisations on some or all of the principles that we have employed at Findhorn. We were a founding ecovillage in the Global Ecovillage Network; we have hosted major conferences on the theme of sustainability at our campus. The principles of ecovillage development can be applied across a broad spectrum of settlements: from the developed to the developing countries; urban and rural, east and west; north and south. The need for sustainable human settlements has never been greater on the planet than today and we believe that our project does contain many elements that can be replicated and applied to other communities and settlements. In 2005 CIFAL Findhorn UNITAR Affiliated Training Centre was established to conduct capacity building programmes for local authorities and leaders. Over 10 years CIFAL Findhorn/Scotland has hosted over 100 seminars addressing policy development and technical issues related to climate change, renewable energies, biodiversity, low-carbon housing, SDGs, circular economy, green jobs, transition towns, local and bioregional food systems, hydrogen economy, sustainable islands and many other themes. In 2005 Gaia Education has been established in Findhorn to provide sustainability education promoting thriving communities within planetary boundaries. Since then it has been developing curricula for sustainable community design draw on good practice within Findhorn and ecovillages worldwide.

Innovative Initiative

Known as the "mother" of ecovillages the Findhorn Ecovillage has been a source of inspiration to the many thousands that have visited our site, largely through seeing what has been achieved through the power of collective vision despite not having the benefit of large investments. There are many small and specific elements that people have learned or benefited from our work, but perhaps the most important is the creativity that can be found from within people motivated to do better that leads to unique and innovative solutions to the challenges we face.

Resources devoted to delivery

Low Carbon Presentations <http://ecovillagefindhorn.com/index.php/ecovillage-findhorn/resources> Most Recent Media References Election Special - breakfast show with Garry McCartney BBC Radio Scotland, June 2017 Government in support for affordable homes near Findhorn Forres Gazette 18 July 2017 Gathering held at peace retreat to reflect on founder Press & Journal (Elgin edition) 26 August 2017 2017 Retreat Guide Kindred Spirit Magazine July/August 2017 Sunday Morning with... Programme. Findhorn mentioned as part of an item about Disturbing the Peace - a film and workshop held at the FFBBC Radio Scotland 24 September 2017 The Stephen Jardine Show A feature called 'A Day in the Life Of' featured Briita Schmitz the focaliser in Cullerne Gardens. BBC Radio Scotland 29 October 2017 The Eco Mobile by Graham Meltzer The Australian Owner Builder Magazine October/November 2017 Foundation named charity of the Year The Forres Gazette 25 October 2017 Findhorn wins charity of the year My Green Pod magazine Guardian- Supplement Autumn 2017 Findhorn Community Anniversary Celebration. Kindred Spirit Magazine November/ December 2017 Rising about the chaos The Garden Island Kauri's newspaper December 2017 Eko is hot off the press The Forres Gazette 20 December 2017 A break from the norm The Scottish Herald Luxury Home magazine Autumn 2017 10 of the best - Scotland's top spas and wellness retreats. (article features Fx) Scottish Field Magazine March 2018 Small scale solar power altering lives Financial Tribune 21 February 2018 Small scale solar power is changing lives and disrupting traditional roles. CNBC (on line) February 2017 Earlier references Title of Article: Ecology becomes the total lifestyle The Sunday Times Scotland John Neil Monro 8 April 1990 Title of Article: True community spirit The Sunday Times Tim Dawson 6 July 1997 Title of Article: Ecological Home Building Individual Homes Matthew Pease June 96 page 34-37 Title of Article: Building in natural balance The Architects Journal Susan Dawson March 96 pages 34-36 Title of Article: Steeped in Scotch The Home Show Magazine Eleanor Grant Issue 4 1996 page 55-59 Title of Article: Houses of



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Spirit Cottages & Castle Natlie Minnis March 95 pages 44-45 Books Published: The Earth is our Habitat: Proposal for a Support Programme for Eco-Habitats as Living Examples of Agenda 21 Planning, Gaia Trust, 1996 Eco-Villages & Sustainable Communities: Models for 21st Century Living, Proceedings from the Conference held at the Findhorn Foundation in October 1995, Findhorn Press, 1996. Simply Build Green, A technical guide to the ecological houses at the Findhorn Foundation, by John Talbott, Findhorn Press, 1993, 1997.