

# Findhorn Foundation

The Findhorn Foundation has been known internationally since 1962 for its experiments with new models for holistic and sustainable living. Today it is at the heart of the largest intentional community in the UK and the centre of a rapidly developing ecovillage. Started in a caravan park in the northeast of Scotland, the Findhorn Foundation is a major centre of adult education conducting programmes for approximately 3000 residential visitors a year from more than 50 countries. Cooperation and co-creation with nature has always been a major aspect of the Foundation's work and from its earliest days it became well-known for its beautiful gardens grown in adverse conditions on the sand dunes of the Findhorn peninsula. Since 1981 the Findhorn Foundation has been involved in the development of the ecovillage as a natural continuation of its work with nature. A number of other organisations within the community work in partnership with the Foundation to help make the ecovillage a reality.

The ecovillage at Findhorn is a tangible demonstration of the links between the spiritual, social and economic aspects of life and is a synthesis of the very best of current thinking on sustainable human settlements. It is a constantly evolving model providing solutions to human and social needs while at the same time working in partnership with the environment to offer an enhanced quality of life for all.

A rich and diverse social fabric has emerged within the Findhorn Foundation Community over the four decades of its existence. The 'human scale' of the experiment has made community participation and involvement an integral part of the ecovillage. The community has been involved in the erection of new buildings, the wind turbine and other physical projects as well as with the development of community policy. Experiments with pay and remuneration, festivals and celebrations, decision-making, governance and leadership, continue to evolve through community life.

## Ecovillage Education and Trainings

Ecovillage education at the Findhorn Foundation is designed to facilitate a transition to a sustainable future. It is an education where a thorough and objective assessment of the state of the planet is followed by regional, community, and location-based solutions, and where theory leads on to practical application. The well-established annual Ecovillage Training and the Ecovillage Design Education programmes provide ample opportunity for developing and broadening skills. They are designed to make optimum use of the information available from the ecovillage, and to provide a practical forum for learning and developing action plans. The programmes promote the use of tools and techniques for creating sustainable community in the fields of ecological building, social economics, organic food production, conflict resolution, environmental art, renewable energy systems, holistic health, global communication, fundraising, eco-restoration and conservation. Over the years we have offered ecovillage education programmes in Brazil, Costa Rica, Portugal, Norway and Israel, and we continue to design and deliver sustainability programmes to communities, organisations and municipalities worldwide. Our campus is used as a teaching resource by a number of university and school groups as well as by professional organisations. The Findhorn Foundation also offers programmes and international conferences that complement, correspond with and support the standards set by the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development – 2005-2014.

The Ecovillage Training has institutional endorsement from UNITAR-United Nations Institute for Training and Research.



The Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) has been established with the mandate of:

- \* Supporting the creation and development of ecovillages
- \* Facilitating the exchange of information, experience and people between ecovillages
- \* Communicating the ecovillage experience to mainstream policy-makers, planners and professionals
- \* Making information about ecovillage concepts and demonstration sites widely available

For more information visit [www.ecovillage.org](http://www.ecovillage.org) or contact your regional GEN office.

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The Global Ecovillage Network has United Nations ECOSOC consultative status.

### Findhorn Foundation

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# The Findhorn Ecovillage New Frontiers for Sustainability

The ecovillage model is a conscious response to the extremely complex problem of how to transform our human settlements, whether they be villages, towns or cities, into full-featured sustainable communities, harmlessly integrated into the natural environment.

The Findhorn Foundation is a founder member of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) and is an NGO associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information, working with intergovernmental agencies in educating and developing policy guidance for sustainable development and for delivery of village-scale sustainability programmes.

The Findhorn Foundation Ecovillage Project received Best Practice designation from the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) in 1998.

# What are Ecovillages?

On a global level there is an increasingly urgent need for positive models which demonstrate a viable, sustainable human and planetary future. Ecovillages address this need, looking at sustainability not only in environmental but also in social, economic and spiritual terms.

Ecovillage principles can be applied equally to urban and to rural settings, to both developing and over-developed countries, and provide solutions to human and social needs, while at the same time protecting the environment and offering an enhanced quality of life for all.

Ecovillages are communities with tightly-knit social structures, united by common ecological, social and/or spiritual values. Working with the simple principle of not taking more away from the Earth than one gives back, ecovillages are consciously diminishing their ecological footprint.

Ecovillages move toward sustainability by putting a high priority on:

- local organic food production
- ecological building
- renewable energy systems
- cooperative, social economies
- inclusive decision-making processes
- cultural and spiritual diversity
- integrated holistic healthcare
- global networking
- holistic and 'whole person' education

*"Ecovillages restore, honour and celebrate the four elements and their interconnected processes in Nature and in people."*



# NEW FRONTIERS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

## Ecological Building

We have erected 57 ecological buildings to date and there are ongoing plans for the continued construction of an ecologically respectful built environment. The ecovillage at Findhorn has developed a unique construction system, environmentally sound and energy efficient. Using natural and non-toxic materials we have developed a 'breathing wall' structure, which allows the fabric of a building to beneficially interact with people to moderate humidity and air quality. We have also experimented with straw bale construction, the 'Earthship' system using recycled car tyres, and remain open to further new and innovative ecological solutions for the built environment.

## Renewable Energy Systems

Numerous homes and community buildings incorporate solar panels for hot water heating. A community company supplies panels to residential and commercial customers, both for new buildings and to retrofit existing buildings. Most new community buildings incorporate design features that invite passive solar radiation to reduce building heating needs, such as south-facing windows and conservatories and minimal wall openings on north walls.

Sustainably harvested wood provides space heating for both new and older homes. A 75 kW wind generator supplies about 15% of the community's electricity needs. Increasing wind generation capacity to 850 kW is planned for 2005. Green electricity generation is one of our successful community businesses.

## Energy Efficiency

The guidelines for new buildings in the ecovillage encourage very high levels of insulation, and double- or triple-glazed windows with low-emissivity window coatings. Architects are encouraged to incorporate energy efficiency considerations into every building design. Energy efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs are installed in many residences, businesses and community buildings. The ecovillage is a test case for a research project on the feasibility of using load management technology, which is equipment that helps match the electricity output of the wind turbines with the electricity requirements of community homes and villages. Energy running costs for newer houses are many times less than the running costs for the original old caravans.

Using solar, wind and wood, combined with highly energy-efficient features in our new buildings, the ecovillage now receives 28% of its total non-transportation energy from renewable sources. This will increase substantially as caravans are replaced with new houses and additional wind turbines are erected. We are undertaking an ecological footprint analysis.

## Biological Waste Water Treatment

To improve the cycle of water use for the settlement, we have developed a phased plan for responsible water management. We built our own waste water treatment facility, completed in 1995, called the Living Machine. A technology developed by Dr John Todd, it uses natural non-chemical biological systems to clean our sewage and creates a mini-ecosystem within a greenhouse environment, mimicking nature's own water cleaning system.

## Recycling

We have implemented an extensive recycling programme (metal, glass, paper, batteries, and a clothing bank) and have been instrumental in encouraging local authorities to expand the range of recycling services to the local area.

## Local Organic Food Production

In 1994 a Community Supported Agriculture Scheme called EarthShare, based on organic and biodynamic farming methods, was established to increase our use of local produce as well as to enhance the quality of our food. The scheme has expanded from 5 to 15 acres, spread over three sites, and currently provides more than 70% of the community's fresh food requirements and supplies 200 individual households.

While EarthShare provides for the fruit and vegetable needs of the community, organic milk, cheeses, eggs and meat are produced by Wester Lawrenceton Farm which covers a 95-acre area overlooking Findhorn Bay and the Moray Firth. With cows, sheep, chickens and dairy facilities, the farm is providing solutions to reducing food miles, while combining the best of traditional methods with 21st century technology. EarthShare joins in efforts to raise public awareness of the dangers of GM foods.

## Sustainable Economics

Over the last 40 years the Findhorn Foundation Community has diversified into more than 40 different businesses and initiatives, providing a model of a vibrant, living local economy. Community businesses include:

- Findhorn Foundation, an international centre of education conducting programmes for approximately 3000 residential guests a year
- Phoenix Community Stores, promoting trade with ethical suppliers, initiating buying policies to support local products
- Ekopia Project, a Development Trust providing community based ethical investments
- Build One, building ecological houses
- Living Technologies Ltd, designing and building natural waste water treatment systems
- Wind Park, electricity supply and wind turbine
- Findhorn Bay Housing Company, providing infrastructure management
- Duneland Limited, landholding company working with conservation, regeneration and ecological human settlement
- Ecovillage Institute, designing and delivering village-scale sustainability programmes
- Phoenix Bakery organic bakers
- Findhorn Centre for the Arts, encouraging the study of the visual arts locally
- Findhorn Bay Caravan Park, offering holiday accommodation
- Findhorn Pottery
- Findhorn Flower Essences, producing floral remedies
- Findhorn Press publishers
- Posthouse Printing, graphic design and printing company
- Moray Steiner School, providing Waldorf Education for children from age 3 to 16
- Newbold House, retreat and workshop centre
- Ecologia Trust, promoting exchange programmes with Russia
- Erraid Community, and associate community in the west of Scotland
- Trees for Life, award winning Scottish ecological restoration project

## Complementary Currency and LETS Scheme

LETS is an acronym for Local Exchange Trading System which allows trade in goods and services without the use of money. Members of the Findhorn Foundation and community along with people in the local area participate in two local LETS schemes, Findhorn and Kinloss LETS and New Moray LETS, the latter is currently the most active LETS scheme in Scotland.

In 2002 we floated the Eko currency scheme, a local system of exchange. The scheme encourages trading with and between community businesses, reduces banking and interest charges, and provides community projects with access to low interest capital. The current issue supports the expansion of our wind turbine project. Ekos are valued at par with sterling ie 1 eko = £1, and notes are in denominations of one, five, and twenty. Residents and guests visiting the community can purchase the notes and use them at participating community organisations.

## Inclusive Decision-Making Processes

The New Findhorn Association was created in 1999 to bring together the diverse organisations and people associated with the community within a 50 mile radius. The association has an elected voluntary Council, but control of all aspects of the Association's affairs ultimately lies with the membership through various democratic processes. The Council's role is to facilitate communication across the community and empower grassroots members to provide services for themselves through a mixture of cooperation, private enterprise, sub-contracting, leasing and other means.

