ONE PLANET COUNCIL

Supporting One Planet Developments

Newsletter 2, Spring 2015

Welcome to the spring edition of the One Planet Council Newsletter!

In this issue, we will be giving you all the latest news for the applications in progress, including an article from successful applicants Jacqui and Tom, after the approval of their prospective planning application for Gardd y Gafel in Pembrokeshire.

We have an article about the Ecological Footprint Calculator, developed by Bill Knight, and how to best use it in your planning application; as well as an introduction to our newest patron, Paul Taylor.

Mark Waghorn, low impact development architect has recently finished his PhD in Cardiff and we'll be telling you a bit about his work

We'll also be giving you some dates for your diary for some OPC events and telling you about how our training days for applicants and planners went!

Remember that the OPC holds Monthly Meetings!

The next is in Newtown, Powys on 5th June.

All are welcome!

Please contact: info@oneplanetcouncil.org.uk for further information

The Transitional Home

The Transitional Home is a design blueprint for a simple, relatively low cost, family dwelling which can be erected quickly, satisfy building regulations and meet the domestic needs for off-grid living.

It is optimised to support and enable individuals and families, in particular those without building experience, to make an easier transition to a more sustainable way of life via the Welsh Government's One Planet Development planning policy.

Mark Waghorn's design for a low impact home.

The development of this project is an on-going collaboration, between OPD explorers Stefan and Natasha Cartwright and architect Mark Waghorn. The open source project is being funded partly through an UnLtd Award grant.

A dedicated webpage for this design and other new ideas will be created later this year. Meanwhile a sketchUp model of the stage 1 home design is available to any who wants it.

Contact the architects office for details: <info@markwaghorn.co.uk>.

Planning Success at Gardd y Gafel!

We asked Jacqui and Tom a few questions about their experience so far..

What do you feel was your impetus to start an OPD?

We had always dreamt of farming some land in Wales and had been looking for a smallholding for a number of years, exploring every option available- from taking on a mortgage, to buying into a co-operative run farm… at one point, in desperation, we even found ourselves contemplating emigrating to Bulgaria!

When we heard about the new OPD policy we went to stay as volunteers at Lammas to find out more. Elements of it seemed to suit our situation very well, though we have to admit that if we had the money we would have bought a farm long ago and saved ourselves a lot of stress! Now that we have committed, however, the idea of building our own house has become very exciting- not least because we have by now had enough of living in damp and dingy old farmhouses which are very beautiful to look at but impractical and expensive to run.

OPD is an amazing opportunity for us to stay in our home country of Wales, to live on the land, to contribute to the rural economy through work that we love to do, to provide nutritious and delicious food for ourselves and others, to try out ideas about regenerative land management which have inspired us for years, to have a cosy and efficient house…all of these things, and more, convinced us that we should do it.

Now that you have had your planning permission granted, what are your plans for the future? How do you see your site progressing over time and what are you hoping to accomplish in this first year on site?

At the time of writing we have just spoken to a contractor regarding tracks and hardstanding, work on which will begin within the month. The rest of this year will be spent putting in foundations and other infrastructure for the dwelling, building a springhouse, building the root cellars, terracing and preparing the ground for planting (e.g. key-line plowing and watering with aerated compost teas), observing and finishing water runoff details, fencing, stonewalling, milling up our timber… need we go on?! The house build will hopefully begin this time next year.

With regards to longer-term plans, the main business we plan to run from our land is a plant nursery which will sell trees and plants which have particular merit, be it in terms of wildlife value, edible or medicinal value, having use in craft, timber / fuel production etc. Basically, all the things we grow on our site will form the basis of our business and we hope to advise and stock other similar projects as they arise. We have already started this on a small scale over the couple of years that we have been applying for planning. Tom's plant knowledge has really developed over this time and this has helped us greatly in the design of our property.

We have named the business / property Pencedni Nurseries (pronounced pen-ked-nee). We wanted a Welsh name that followed the tradition of having a geographical or historical connection to its surroundings. Finding something pronounceable to a potential customer who was not a Welsh speaker proved challenging. The valley that we live at the head (or 'Pen') of is Cwm Cedni (literally the valley of foxes), so we went for that. We will be setting up a website before too long with a blog and a plants list, so watch this space- pencedni.co.uk!

Now that you have come out the other side, what is your view of the OPD application process, looking back? Do these thoughts differ from how you felt while going through it?

The OPD application process is stringent but achievable. It stimulated a great deal of thought about the finer details of our plans and helped us immensely in getting clear with each other about what we are doing and why.

Our planning officer was easy to talk to and although she gave us very little information along the way, which was frustrating, I think our experience was very much in keeping with any applicant for a private dwelling.

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Hello from the new editor.

My name is Nikki Small and I am the newsletter editor.

I'm still quite new to One Planet Developments, and so I am enjoying learning as I go along from all the experiences that others are sharing with me, as well as from the wonderful advice from the OPC.

I am very open to suggestions for the newsletter, so if anyone has anything that they would like to see included in a future issue, then please don't hesitate to get in touch with me on nikkilouisesmall@gmail.com

I look forward to hearing from you!

Nikki

Current Applications:

Pwll Broga: A retrospective application for one timber-craft based holding in Pembrokeshire. Currently under consideration by the local planning authority.

Bryn yr Blodau: A retrospective application for a mixed smallholding in Pembrokeshire. Currently under consideration by the local planning authority.

Pelen Gwellt: A prospective application in Pembrokeshire. Currently under consideration by the local planning authority.

Cwm Coed Farm. A prospective application in Powys. Currently under consideration by the local planning authority.

Rhiw Las: A mixed 4-unit eco-hamlet in Carmarthenshire

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In many ways the process was very fair- it is a really big deal to be allowed to build on what is deemed 'open countryside'. It has been decades since this sort of development has been considered and it is important to realise how privileged we are to be in this position.

Our views on the process have definitely changed since 'coming out the other side' of the process. We often felt disheartened by the complicated details and inevitable expenses required for the application. We had attended other applicants' hearings and witnessed the difficulties associated with the new policy. It seemed likely that we would be refused and would have to go back to the drawing board and re-submit a second application. This sort of thing was terrible for our motivation levels and it was often difficult to sit down and work on the application, especially on sunny days when there was gardening to do and fun to be had elsewhere! On the other hand, it encouraged us to be very thorough.

Are there any elements of your application which you feel were particularly strong, and therefore critical to your success in gaining planning permission?

The business plan is an essential part of an OPD application as it is one of the main justifications for living on the land. Jacqui's experience in administration and management meant that we were able to compile a clear proposal that combined several small businesses that complimented each other and were not over-ambitious.

Tom has spent most of his working life as an agricultural worker- gardening, drystone walling, hedge laying, forestry etc. He has also had a lifelong passion for the natural world. This has given him a strong vision of how to manage our land to maximize its potential within the limits of environmental and ecological responsibility. I think this came across throughout the document and gave the many threads of the application coherence.

Whilst writing we were very aware of the need to demonstrate our competence and commitment, so we spent lots of time researching and referencing documents to back up what we were saying and I think that paid off.

What advice, if any, would you give to those who are considering making an OPD application?

Buy land that can realistically support the ideas you have, but also be conscious and receptive to allow that land to shape your ideas. Devote as much time as you can to research, because only a broad knowledge base will bring clarity to your vision. Meet your neighbours and be honest with them from the outset. Remember that no-one ever 'owns' land, they only look after it for the next person- treat this as a privilege rather than a right and show your gratitude by working hard. Don't forget that countless other life forms also share this land and have done for as long as it has existed, and that they will be affected by your every action. Earn their respect by living in their service and ultimately you yourself will thrive. Accept that the application is a paper exercise and get help from wherever you can in compiling it. And above all don't get disheartened- have hope!

Jacqui and Tom

Community Share Offer: join us in creating sustainable rural livelihoods

The Ecological Land Co-operative works to reconnect people and land through the provision of affordable low-impact smallholdings to new entrants to horticulture and mixed farming. Having developed our first cluster of three smallholdings at Greenham Reach, Devon we are now seeking to fund the development of our next site via withdrawable community shares. Our share offer opens on 27th April 2015.

This is an exciting opportunity to be part of the development of sustainable small-scale farming in the UK, and we'd love to have you on board. Please visit our website or call us for more information.

T: 01273 911494 e: info@ecologicalland.coop

Ecological Footprinting is one of the key measures of One Planet Development, because the aim of the policy is to reduce the ecological impact of Welsh citizens so that we are using our fair share of the planet's resources.

The Welsh Government have provided an Ecological Footprint Calculator that you can use to work out your footprint. When you apply for planning permission you must provide an estimate of your household's footprint both when you move in and after 5 years. This must show that you can meet the required target of 2.4 global hectares per person, with the aim of reducing to 1.88 global hectares in the long term. You do not have to provide your current Ecological Footprint, but it will be much easier to make an estimate if you have a go with the spreadsheet based on your current spending, and you can also see how close you are to achieving a One Planet footprint and where you might be able to make improvements. The first page of the spreadsheet is for you to enter your numbers, and the second page shows the breakdown of your results.

To do this, you need to know how much money you spend in a year on all of the different categories such as energy, rent, food, goods and services. The easiest way is to keep a record of everything you spend for a month and then multiply the figures by 12 to estimate yearly spend. Tracking your spending for longer will give a better estimate, especially for things that are seasonal like energy use. An important point to note is that ecological impacts associated with your business are not counted - it is only an estimate of your personal footprint.

- Erica Thompson

OPD at the Hay Festival!

On Thursday 21st of May at 5:30pm, Jane Davidson, director of INSPIRE, will be talking to David Thorpe, author of The One Planet Life, a Blueprint for Low Impact Development (Routledge, 2015, 438pp, 300 colour images), about his book and the work of The One Planet Council.

Members can buy a copy of The One Planet Life at 20% discount on the cover price of £25.99 by going to http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415738552 and, at check-out, adding the code DC361.

Paul Taylor - our newest Patron

Paul is passionate about the environment and how we can all be much more resource efficient. He advocates ways whereby we bring about change through the day-to-day choices that we make and explains why sustainability needs to be at the heart of how we live and how we do business. Sustainability is the constant theme that underpins why Paul works with public sector and community sector organisations. Through his experience, at Director level in the public, private and community sectors, he understands the need to collaborate and partner if we are to achieve the common goals of sustainability and community resilience and wellbeing. He specialises in building partnerships and helping initiate innovative sustainability projects. With a track record of championing sustainability and greater equality since 1990 Paul enjoys working with pioneering organisations on projects, in the social enterprise sector, with business and local government. Paul is currently working with communities in Wales and the Marches that are looking to develop one planet community owned sustainable and affordable housing solutions. Paul is currently:

- Board Member of WM Homes (Housing Association)
- Independent Advisor to National Community Land Trust Network
- Community Housing Advising to the Charities Aid Foundation – Social Investment Fund
- Independent Advisor Community Land Advisor Service Cymru
- Board Member Cwm Harry Community Land Trust
- Board Member Homes Presteigne Housing Cooperative

We welcome Paul and thank him for his involvement.

Projects in Pre-Application

OPD Development in Hebron: A mixed smallholding project in Pembrokeshire

Carningli Sylvan: An OPD proposal in the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park specialising in Balwen sheep and lavender produce

Middle Crwys: A mixed smallholding in Monmouthshire

OPC Training Days

We hosted 2 training courses at the start of May to provide information and advice on how to put together and access One Planet Development planning proposals.

The first event was for local authority planners and other professionals from all over Wales; most of which had some experience of OPD and were able to share their experiences of OPD from the pre-application stage through to approval and monitoring, as well as learning from the expert guidance on offer from speakers James Shortern, Bill Knight, Mark Waghorn and Tao Wimbush. Consultants involved in preparing and assessing applications also took the opportunity to find out more about the process and requirements.

The second event was aimed at current or potential OPD applicants, with the goal of ensuring that applications arriving on planning officer's desks are strong and cover all the required information and can be assessed without delay, streamlining the process for all involved. The same topics were covered as in the event for professionals, but with an emphasis on the construction of a sound business plan and how it should be adapted to different circumstances.

A highlight of both days was a tour around Tir-y-Gafel (Lammas) eco village. Tir-y-Gafel provided many things: a course venue in the stunning, recently completed, Hub building; an excellent locally-sourced meal for participants; expertise and commentary from Tao Wimbush; and not least inspiration as both professionals and applicants saw in person what a successful One Planet Development can look like, and how it contributes to local economy, environment and community.

Given the high level of demand and excellent feedback received for both courses, the One Planet Council intends to run more events in the near future. Stay tuned for further details!