

EcoVillage Community Hostel

“Living space inspired by nature connection for youth and the young at heart to transform”

Findhorn EcoVillage:

Findhorn Ecovillage is an experimental architectural community based at The Park, in Moray, Scotland, near the village of Findhorn. The project's main aim is to demonstrate a sustainable development in environmental, social, and economic terms.

Findhorn Foundation, founded in 1962 is a “dynamic experiment where everyday life is guided by the inner voice of spirit, where we work in co-creation with the intelligence of nature and take inspired action towards our vision of a better world. Findhorn Foundation shares learning and way of life in experiential workshops, conferences and events that take place within a thriving community and ecovillage”

Demand

Findhorn Ecovillage enjoys 4,000 attendees at programmes and conferences and around 10,000 visitors each year and generates over £5m for the local economy each year. Originally the Findhorn Foundation encompassed all areas of community life and ran all courses, programmes and facilities. Today there is a thriving community of around 600 people (NFA estimate) connected to Findhorn EcoVillage with its 35 independent organisations. Findhorn Foundation has over 50,000 followers across the world on Facebook.

New accommodation is needed

- To replace capacity being lost with the change of use of various bed and breakfast facilities
- Visiting friends and family as part of the expanding local community
- Overflow for conferences, events and festivals several times during the year
- Annual returnees who love to come back to Findhorn and would like a regular and reliable home from home for the period whilst feeling connected to the community
- Short-term affordable spaces to enable young people to live/work/visit the community before or after Findhorn Foundation programmes
- Self-contained programmes and courses run outside Findhorn Foundation to have most/all participants on one site eg nature connection, yoga, meditation, dance, sustainability leadership
- Medium term live/work spaces to enable people to transition into living in NFA community

Mission

EcoVillage Community Hostel is designed to celebrate nature connection in all aspects of its design and lived experience to enable guests to transform themselves and the world around them. The hotel is located close to the dunes, sea and woodland on one hand and conscious community living on the other. ECH supports local Findhorn inspired entrepreneurs providing training programmes, events, workshops, yoga sessions with accommodation for participants and a meeting/activity room.

Response: EcoVillage Community Hostel

Somewhere between a boutique hotel and eco-hostel, enabling young people to affordable to stay and visit but open to people of all ages. 8-10 rooms for short-term rent including bunks, twins and doubles, ensuite and non-ensuite. Bookable for individuals or whole groups within a nature-connected inspired design. Supported by two part-time hosts living in two studios onsite. Large natural build large

kitchen/lounge area plus space for yoga/dance/meditation. EcoVillage Community Hostel aims at being a living demonstration model for sustainability and to align to the Scottish Government's vision for a local-carbon economy by 2030. The EcoVillage Community Hostel is part of a wider economic strategy to boost and retain tourism within the Moray and Highlands regions and both responds to existing demand but is also part of the infrastructure that enables future events, courses and conference managers to plan around. Stakeholder ownership and investment models welcomed to maximise use and success. Business model would see a blend of full-bookings for whole centre with hostel style individual bookings - varying across the year with priority bookings for key stakeholders/supporters.

Conscious Community Culture

EcoVillage Community Hostel has two hosts who work part-time and oversee the smooth running of the place. Guests are encouraged to see themselves as participants of a transitional conscious community rather than consumers and take active responsibility for themselves, their environment and be mindful of well-being of others during their stay. Guests encouraged to maximise their experience by volunteering and engaging with Cullerne Garden, in particular and the kitchens in the Park during their stay..

Ownership and Funding

The aspiration would be for a stakeholder or community ownership model that ensures shared commitment to success, shared networks, skills, interests, passions, shared rewards. Everyone has "skin in the game" over the long-term. This might be a Community Interest Company or similar model. Possible stakeholders ideally be those with a vested business interest in seeing the project being rented out - young person's groups, Findhorn College, Dance North, Moray Arts Centre, Universal Hall, Findhorn Foundation Conference Team

Finance options:

As a boutique hotel experience serving the community within strong seasonal fluctuations in demand the proposal will require a range of finance and funding.

- Debt-finance, community loans over 30 years @ 5-7% fixed rate - enables CIC / community ownership, offers small but steady returns, risk is against business performance over a long-period
- Equity investors take stake in value of property over a long-term, could mean flexibility on returns vs business performance - likely to require private ownership and ongoing use of property as hotel dependent upon will/interest of owner.
- Crowd-funding - campaign to raise funds to buy the land (eg 50-70,000) across Findhorn's networks and keep the land held for community benefit
- Grants - funds for feasibility and development work, build-school, specific facilities ie dance or yoga studio, innovation in design or educational properties

Assumptions:

Location

Adjacent to Cullerne Garden/direct access into the gardens and dunes

Design

Nature Connection is a core value at Findhorn EcoVillage and is the core inspiration for the design of the EcoVillage Community Hostel - that it enables guests to experience and be inspired by nature connection

through location - close to Cullerne Gardens and the dunes, through lighting - visibility of surrounding nature and sky, raw materials in the build that are clearly visible, and integration of plants and wildlife inside and outside. Limited by 1.5 storey - the design will mirror local scottish rural terrace designs and borrow learnings from the build of the Centinis locally

Design Specifics

- 1.5 storeys - two floors of living space within
- Style inspired by Swedish Nature House Barn and Black-houses of Lewis and Harris
- 8 rooms @ 20m2 ensuite
- 2 studios @ 25m2 (affordable housing for part-time hosts)
- 1 Utility room @ 11m2
- 1 toilet 9m2
- 1 shower 9m2
- 1 kitchen/diner/communal kitchen @50m2 (natural build school) first floor
- 1 meeting space/yoga studio/library @50m2 (natural build school) second floor
- Glasshouse feature - entrance with raised platform for star-gazing
- Walkway/corridors to rooms
- Local energy - Ground source heating systems/micro turbines/passive heating
- Rainwater harvesting for plant feeding and toilet flushing
- Considering shepherd's huts and compost toilets outside for summer months

Future Proofing

Rooms and centre designed for future adaptability as needed - to flex with future demand ie potential to change size and access points to turn rooms to studios or studios to flats or whole site to large shared housing etc.

Estimated Business Patterns - Occupancy Rates Estimated

Winter:	30%
Spring:	60%
Summer:	90%
Autumn:	60%

Funding and Investment

- Ekopia Community Benefit Society on funding and investment models
- Private investors - buying shares/portions of hotel
- Crowd-funding from across the Findhorn Ecovillage international community
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise - link to social investment funds Moray Tourism agenda
- Raise funds to pay for specific rooms to be held as discount for younger people

Total build cost

- Costs and sizes modelled upon PET West Whins Development
- Around £500,000 inclusive of any purchase
- 30 year repayment schedule on loans
- £1500 m2 build cost budgets (Greenleaf West Whins experience) for rooms/studios.

- £1000m2 -£1500m2 for natural build school kitchen/lounge area (Hartwyn Natural Builders) with 4 month build times for projects (natural builders sourced via Hartwyn's networks and natural builders networks online and selected against criteria)

Ecovillage Community Hostel vs Findhorn EcoVillage Criteria

Housing Statement: This document describes an overall vision for our community in relation to the development of housing. We anticipate that if and when all relevant organisations have agreed to this vision, then a more detailed set of policies will be created to provide more specific and implementable guidelines for developers.

Housing Statement Criteria	EcoVillage Community Hostel Proposal
Community ownership, community building, community engagement, collaboration	Community Interest Company or stakeholder model - protects ownership of the assets Stakeholder board / advisory group - to be sensitive and aligned to community values Profits - return for community investors with % of profits donated to community organisations EcoVillage Community Hostel stakeholders - Findhorn Foundation Education + Conference Team, Findhorn College, Universal Hall, Moray Arts Centre, Moray Arts Festival, Findhorn Bay Caravan Park to provide accommodation as needed in response to events and programmes.
Social sustainability	Creates two part-time jobs and provides studios for staff - enabling sustainable live/work options. Provides accommodation for people to experience and participate in the community on the journey to potential joining community. Space for friends and family to stay whilst visiting community members Enables family members to stay and visit community members. Entry point to experience community - and potential future members.
Affordability and redressing the balance in age demographics	Variety of prices, doubles, singles, twins and bunks - covering all budgets. Natural build school for part of the hotel will attract younger audiences.
Construction methods and design, environment sustainability	Aim - low carbon design, using local materials, natural build for part of building, local energy generation (eg ground source heat pumps), rain-water capture and use (for washing/flushing) passive solar, local wind-turbine, recycled materials, compost toilets.
How well the proposal is grounded in the co-creation with nature principle, and what specific steps the proposal stipulates to evidence its respect for this principle (please see designs below)	Engagement with representatives of nature group on concept, location, design - contact and access with nature designed into hotel experience, access to dunes, gorse. Design to interact and celebrate nature throughout - glasshouse with plants, windows to maximise light and view of skies at night, opening out onto Cullerne Gardens

Who will control/own the homes that would be built as part of the proposal.	Community benefit structure - so share of profits/returns on investment go back into the community. Aims to look and feel like "our" hotel Ownership model to be developed through discussions with stakeholders and investors
The extent to which the sale terms capture future increases in value for general community benefit.	Community interest company - protects value of assets for community benefit with criteria as to sale or disposal in line with community benefit
The extent to which the proposal, provides a mechanism for ensuring or supporting the advancement of the community's affordable housing objectives.	The studios provide affordable means for people to stay in the community medium term. Discounts considered for longer-bookings in off season for people seeking affordable means to be in the community

Author: Owen Jarvis

15 years of successful social and community enterprises experience, particularly within the housing sector - as co-founder, CEO, fundraiser, consultant, researcher, designer and trained by prestigious Clore Social Leadership Programme and University of Cambridge's Business School. Owen has lived in Findhorn Ecovillage for over 2 years on, is a member of the NFA, was employed by Findhorn Foundation to support stewards and board assess options and strategy on redeveloping residential and office spaces. He has carried out enquiries for the NFA community into the needs of young people and opportunities for Tiny Homes. He also spent 6 months as part of the Cullerne Garden team.

Adviser: Sally Middleton

Sally Middleton has run Rainbow Lodge bed and breakfast accommodation in Findhorn Ecovillage for a number of years, is well connected and respected within Findhorn Ecovillage. Sally has a career in business management, and has advised and supported a number of entrepreneurs and NGOs.

Knowledge Holders To Consult Within Findhorn

- Greg Paul - Duneland
- Fasil Bogale - Ekopia
- John Moon - Savitri (Local Bed and Breakfast)
- Iris Toisler - Environmental Steward, Findhorn Foundation (Hotel Industry)
- Stephen Couling - Heritage Architecture/Nature Connection Group
- Jake Jay-Lewin - NextGen leadership

EcoVillage Community Hostel Inspirations

Inspirations from Swedish Glasshouse Concepts along lines below - alongside use of local materials and cob, cordwood, strawbale, roundhouse designs of natural building schools -





Natural Build School - could create a kitchen/diner/communal room and a second space for activities, workshops, social.



Inspirations

Conscious and green hostels and hotels are increasing popular. People are increasingly seeking flexible DIY solutions to needs within shared-economy. Alongside the existing inspirations across the Ecovillage including Whisky Barrels and Universal Hall and building upon the experiences of Rainbow Lodge and other bed and breakfasts locally including straw bale - we want to draw upon ideas from elsewhere:

<https://drivadan.dk/#hih> (danish glasshouses)

<https://www.dezeen.com/2015/10/09/tailor-made-arkitekter-archetypal-barn-glasshouse-architecture-uppgrenna-nature-house-sweden/> (Glasshouse, naturehouse space)

<https://42acres.com/> (conscious hotel experience, co-creativity, innovation)

<https://plumvillage.org/> (mindfulness practice, Zen designs)

<https://thehappycity.com/> (designing to achieve happiness and well-being)

<https://impacthub.net/> (co-created innovation space, where users pay weekly/monthly rates and take responsibility for sharing the management of flexible, adaptable space, sharing knowledge/skills)

<https://www.conscioushotels.com> (growing movement for eco, conscious hotels and hostels)