

# The Bodhi Eco Project

## Draft Social Contract

The purpose of this evolving document, designed by current supporters and the management team, is to convey to potential community members the intention of the Bodhi eco-community. The first part outlines our vision, followed by community agreements. There will also be a handbook with more details (to be written).

### The Vision

The Bodhi Eco Village is an optimistic, creative and empowering response to the social and environmental difficulties of today's world; a model for healthy living and sustainable development.

Bodhi is a place of ongoing environmental, social and spiritual enquiry, with the aim to live resourcefully, creatively and simply. 'Bodhi' can be translated as 'waking up' or 'coming to our senses'. Our guiding aspiration is '**mindful living**', referring to the open and spacious quality of mindfulness as taught in Buddhism and other wisdom traditions. It involves being aware of one's thoughts, feelings and actions in the present moment and in a non-judgemental way. Mindfulness forms the basis for all our other principles, ethical guidelines and practices. It includes a felt sense of our **interconnectedness** with all life that ultimately leads to treating others and the earth as oneself. (This vision is also described as 'Deep Ecology'.) The Bodhi eco project manifests and nurtures a culture of mindfulness through many and various life affirming practices such as meditation, yoga, tai-chi, study, communication-enhancing events, the arts and work.

Side by side to mindfulness, we embrace the importance of **kindness and generosity**. Among the expressions of this altruistic spirit is the willingness to share in the social life of the village, attend meetings, contribute some voluntary work, and practice honest and compassionate communication. We are also committed to interacting with the wider community, through work, teaching and celebratory events.

At Bodhi we **decrease our ecological footprints** by reducing our consumption, recycling our waste, and reusing/repairing materials and equipment. Our buildings, energy generation and waste management make use of, and contribute to up-to-date research into **eco-technology**.

**Permaculture design principles** will be central to the design and stewardship of the entire site. This will lead to a rich and harmonious relationship between people, dwellings and the immediate natural environment. Such design will incorporate the enhancement and creation of wildlife habitats, sustainably managed woodlands, food production areas and features of natural beauty. Land management practices on the entire site, communal and private, will be entirely **organic**.

In order to reduce energy demand and ease replication, there will be some **settlement-wide strategies in building-design** , whilst allowing room for personal expression.

We will manage the **financial aspects** of the village in a way which seeks to enable equal responsibility, and which seeks to reduce the impact of wider social inequality on our lives. On the one hand this means that those who help the village by bringing money in to purchase or build homes will be enabled - if they leave - to be able to take the equivalent money with them. On the other hand this means adopting a Land Trust model of ownership, ensuring that the village is open and affordable to those without this purchasing power. To this end up to 50% of the homes in the village will be formed out of housing co-ops, supported housing, a children's house, a home for elderly members of the village, and so on.

**Decision making** is by consensus. There will be an elected village council and important decisions affecting the whole village will be made at a 'Forum meeting', attended by all members of bodhi.

## Community Agreements

This part of the document outlines what we agree to as citizens living in the Bodhi eco-village. More details will be included in a resident's handbook. Prospective villagers will broadly embrace the vision as outlined above. The following headings provide some more specific guidelines.

### Mindfulness practice

Members of the community will be expected to understand and value the concept of mindfulness (as outlined above) and to be committed to its practice.

### Communication & Resolving Conflicts

Villagers will be committed to open, kind and truthful communication, including deep listening to others. They are willing to put time and energy into developing and refining their skills by practising methods such as Non-Violent Communication (or communication with compassion) in order to resolve conflicts creatively and amicably as they arise.

### Community work

Adults living in the village will be expected to offer voluntary work such as gardening, maintenance, administration, cooking, etc..This could take an average of 4 days a month, and monetary exchange will be possible.

### Management & Decision Making

Villagers will be expected to agree to the decision making structures as outlined above, familiarise themselves with the concensus principle and attend important meetings.

### Permaculture principles

We would like everyone in the village to have studied permaculture and be willing to live in accordance with its principles.

### Food & Gardening

Most of our food will be grown and/or accessed locally. Communal meals will be vegetarian/vegan. In our homes we may choose to eat meat and fish. The keeping of animals for food is a matter of consultation with residents and will be in accordance with organic and permaculture principles.

### Pets

There will be a limit on the number of pets with the village as a whole. Pet management will be the responsibility of the owners.

### Energy

We will comply with the general energy policy of the village, reducing our carbon emissions through low energy designs and being mindful of our consumption. We will produce our own power from renewable sources.

### Buildings

Within the constraints of the building regulations and local planning bylaws, we will follow best practices for sustainable design and construction. This will include careful consideration of the design and construction process, monitoring the selection of materials, possible pollutants, etc. Residents, who want to build their own homes, will be prepared to consider collective design features.

### Transport

We intend that most villagers will work within the village or within cycling/walking distance to public transport. Alternatives to car use and also car sharing are encouraged.

### Waste

Everyone in the village will be working to reduce waste to zero by re-pairing, re-using and re-cycling. Waste disposal will be monitored and evaluated.

### Water

We aim to conserve water through good design and mindful consumption. Design aspects may include re-using rainwater and grey water, as well as treating waste water through an agreed ecological system such as reed beds and flow forms.

### Joining and Leaving the Village

There will be a specified process for both joining and leaving the village (see handbook for more details). In outline, anyone wishing to join must demonstrate their desire to live in accordance with the principles outlined here by signing a contract and undergoing a trial period of up to 6 months. Property cannot be owned as a holiday home. Any home-owners wishing to leave must first offer to sell their property to the community, who can use it themselves or sell it. 6 months notice may be required to allow new residents to go through the joining procedure.