



Awen *ecovillage*

A proposed intentional community



September 2023 | Updated Jan 2026

Images: Top right by Simon Maxwell

Introduction

Welcome to this concept paper!

The paper sketches out an idea for a new intentional community, in the form of an ecovillage, to be envisioned, planned and co-created into existence on land or property (yet to be identified or acquired) in Cymru/Wales.

What's an intentional community?

According to researcher Bill Metcalf... “Intentional communities are formed when people choose to live with or near enough to each other to carry out a shared lifestyle, within a shared culture, and with a common purpose”.

What examples are out there?

There are many types of intentional communities, including housing co-operatives, cohousing communities and ecovillages. Examples of ecovillages include those at [Findhorn](#) in Scotland, [Lammas](#) in Wales and [Cloughjordan](#) in Ireland.

Why start a new community?

Anyone can seek to join an existing ecovillage, but there's always room for new communities. For a list of some of the benefits (and challenges!) of community living, see the *Wildhousing* [Intentional communities](#) page.

Why in Cymru / Wales?

Principally because there is the [One Planet Development](#) (OPD) planning policy in Wales, which is now well-established. The intention is that some of the homes that form part of the overall ecovillage would be OPD smallholdings.

Why 'Awen' ecovillage?

It's a working title. Awen means 'inspiration' in Welsh, Cornish and Breton – typically artistic or poetic inspiration. In Modern Druidism, it means “flowing energy”. Other names are also possible e.g. an existing farm or local place name.

The ecovillage (draft)

Overall aim – to envision, plan and co-create into existence a sustainable, heart-centred and resilient intentional community – one where people are grounded to the earth, connected to nature, and focused on regenerative living.

Guiding principles – currently as follows...

- **People** – family-friendly, multi-generational and inclusive; with a framework for decision-making and conflict resolution
- **Place** – co-creating beautiful and characterful buildings and spaces, inspired by the local area, and supporting low carbon travel
- **Planet** – respect and care for the Earth and all living beings, resilience and self-sufficiency, minimising waste and pollution
- **Permaculture** – embracing the design of human habitats that are healing and regenerative for people, nature, the soil and the Earth
- **Prosperity** – manifesting and sustaining abundance in all forms for the benefit of the ecovillage residents and the local area

Other essentials – perhaps these...

- Economically viable and sustainable
- A clear route to obtaining planning permission
- Opportunities for people with a local connection
- Residential accommodation to include affordable options
- Embodying a sense of shared endeavour
- A model that others can follow

Homes – could be a mix of existing homes, new homes e.g. barn conversions, and residential smallholdings under OPD or [Rural Enterprise Dwelling](#) policies.

Livelihoods – scope for land-focused income-earning, e.g. regenerative agriculture, sustainable food, forestry and timber products, organic farm shop and café, creative arts, education and learning, and holiday accommodation.

Shared assets – depends on the site and setup; potentially... access tracks, parking area, community hub, workspaces to rent, woodland, water resource.

Potential benefits

For ecovillage residents...

- Access to land for food growing and self-sufficiency
- Opportunity to establish land-based or creative business
- Advantages of collaboration within an intentional community
- Scope for mutual support, as well as sharing of ideas and resources
- Opportunities to learn new skills, gain experience, and meet new people

For collaborators, including any partner organisations...

- Offering affordable land, plots and opportunities
- Tangible support for local sustainable food production
- Opportunity for greater scale of positive impact and public benefit
- Ability to showcase agro-ecological farming and regenerative living practices
- Scope for new partnerships and collaborations going forwards

For local communities where the ecovillage is located...

- Local supply of fresh organic and nutrient-dense produce
- New employment, training, and volunteering opportunities
- Support for local businesses and diversification of the local economy
- A reason for young people to continue to live locally rather than move away
- Support for nature, biodiversity, and wildlife in your local area

For any landowners who might have suitable farmland available...

- A willing buyer (or lessee) of your farm holding
- Help to enable local community, environmental, and economic benefits
- Potential to visit or stay engaged with the project going forwards

Legal, finance & planning

Legal



A suitable legal structure will be needed and legal advice is likely to be required for this. It might be possible for an existing organisation to take the lead in acquiring the freehold of the chosen site for the ecovillage. Alternatively, a bespoke legal entity could be set up for this purpose (e.g. Community Interest Company). Parcels of land could then be sold for residential, smallholdings or social enterprise use on a freehold or leasehold basis. A further legal entity (e.g. Co-operative or Community Benefit Society) may be needed to own and manage any shared community assets.

Finance



Sufficient funds will need to be raised for the initial site acquisition, plus stamp duty and conveyancing costs; with further funds identified for site infrastructure and setup costs. Initial acquisition is likely to be £700k to £2m+ and could involve individuals or organisations collaborating to contribute funds. Potentially, some plots could be split and sold to recoup some of the initial acquisition costs.

Planning



Planning permission is likely to be required for change of use, built development or groundworks, although there are 'permitted development rights' for some agricultural works. Potential farms will be assessed in light of designations, constraints and local planning policies. Pre-application advice can be sought from the local planning authority.

How, where & when?

How?

The project will need the right people (or organisations) with the right experience, expertise and funds converging to take the project forwards. The vision can then be refined, a business plan produced, and possible locations considered. Discussions with potential landowners and other stakeholders will be required. Some criteria will be needed to assess applications for those wanting to live, work, volunteer, or establish a small business or social enterprises at the earth village.

Where?

Anywhere in Wales really – although perhaps in a location away from the busiest roads and conurbations, such as in SW, Mid or NW Wales; and where property prices are sufficiently affordable. In terms of the site, the aim would be to find a farm or other rural business premises for sale, perhaps with a house, other buildings or development, and sufficient acreage of land. The site would need to have a good highway access and local road network, with public transport nearby. For other possible criteria, see the [Looking for Land guide](#) (external website).

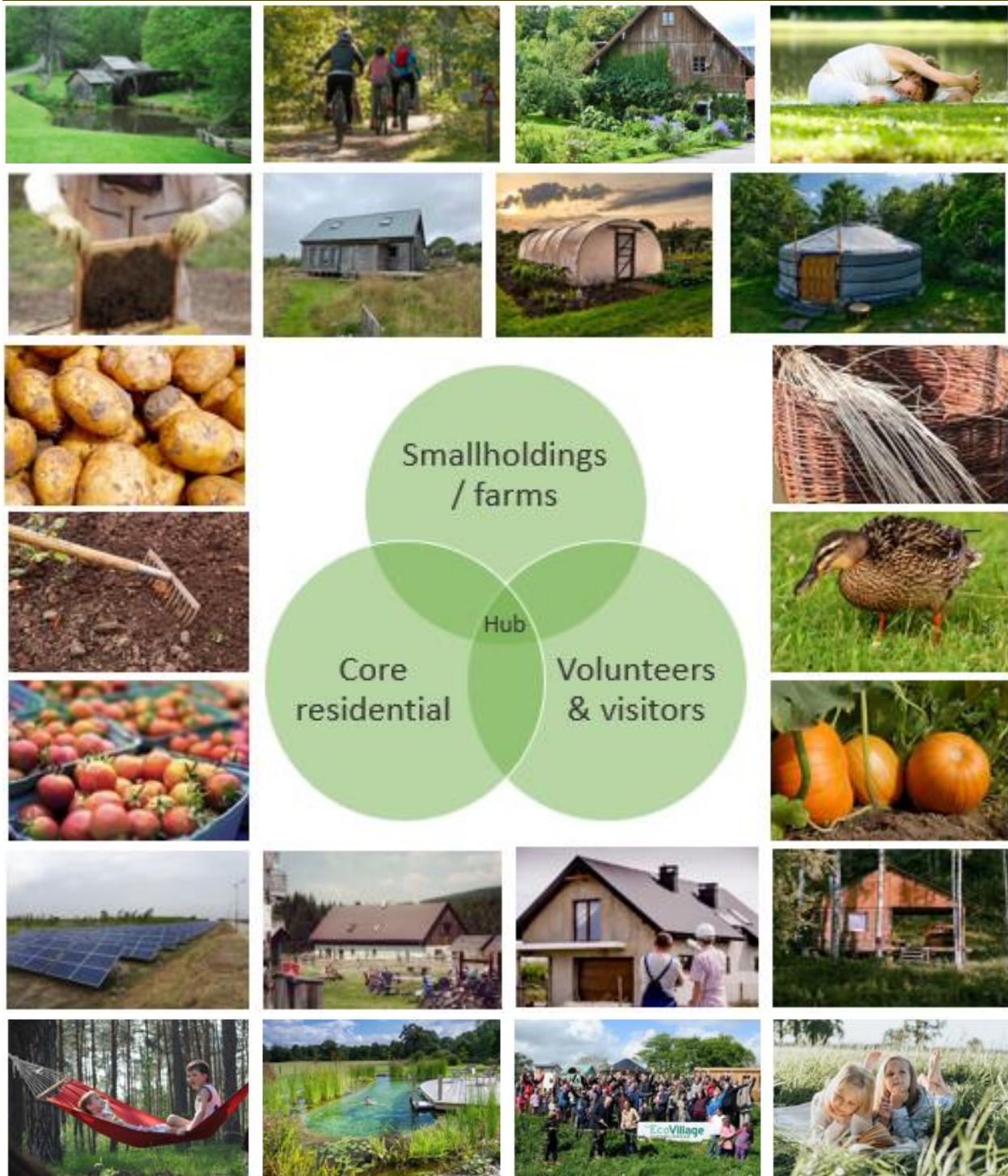
When?

The intention, from a starting point of the mid-2020s, is that the ecovillage will be established on the ground within around five years. The community could start forming remotely, once a suitable site had been acquired. This does depend on there being wider interest in the project and funds to acquire the site. Potentially there will also need to be a smaller, initial project to develop the operational model.

How to get involved

- Subscribe to receive new posts from [Wildhousing](#)
- Send feedback or questions to wildhousing@yahoo.com
- Share the Awen ecovillage idea with other like-minded people
- Check out [Should You Start an Intentional Community or Join One?](#)
- Interested landowners or partners, please get in touch

Images



The end (for now)