



Awen *ecovillage*

A proposed land-based community



September 2023 | Updated Aug 2026

Images: Top right by Simon Maxwell

Introduction

Welcome to this concept paper!

The paper sketches out an idea for a new land-based community – a kind of loose-knit ecovillage, or a settlement of smallholdings – to be envisioned, planned and co-created into existence on land or property in Cymru/Wales.

What's a land-based community?

We're talking about a rural [intentional community](#) of people focusing on sustainable, low-impact living. Most households would live on their own plots (homesteads or smallholdings). There may also be scope for a housing co-operative.

What examples are out there?

There are various [types of intentional communities](#). An example of a 'low impact' community is [Lammas Ecovillage](#) in South West Wales. There are also interesting places like [Tinkers Bubble](#) in Somerset and [Cae Mabon](#) in North Wales.

Why start a new community?

Many people are interested in sustainable, low impact living, and land-based livelihoods. When small plots of land come up for sale, the price per acre is often quite high. A more co-operative approach might reap benefits.

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 – but not all – of the homes that form part of the 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, resilient and low impact 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 and multi-generational, with a framework for decision-making and conflict resolution;
- **Place** – co-creating beautiful and characterful buildings and spaces, in keeping with local area, and accessible by 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 for the benefit of ecovillage residents, their families, and beyond.

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-based income-earning, e.g. regenerative agriculture, sustainable food, forestry and timber products, artisans and makers, education and learning, health and wellbeing, and visitor 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 a loose-knit 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 would be 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
- Enhancement of local biodiversity, nature and wildlife

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

- A willing buyer of your farm holding or rural business premises
- Help to enable local community, environmental, and economic benefits
- Potential to stay involved in the project going forwards

Legal, finance & planning

Legal



A suitable legal structure will be needed and legal advice is likely to be required. It might be possible for an existing organisation to take the lead in acquiring the freehold of land with the right potential. Otherwise, a bespoke legal entity could be set up for this purpose (e.g. limited company). Once the land is acquired, parcels could be split and sold for OPD smallholdings, or leased to social enterprises. Further legal entities could be established as required, for example to own and manage any jointly-owned land or assets.

Finance



Sufficient funds will be needed for the legal entity acquiring the land – potentially from a group of co-buyers who have the necessary capital between them. Initial acquisition is likely to be £700k to £1.5m+, and the costs of stamp duty and conveyancing will need factoring in. Those involved with the project would also need to have, or raise, funds for site infrastructure e.g. new tracks, borehole, etc, and construction or conversion work as required. Some land or plots could be split and sold to recoup funds.

Planning



Potential land or farms will be assessed for their potential in light of designations, constraints and local planning policies. Before the land is acquired, ecological and highway surveys will be commissioned as necessary. For any change of use or development works, planning permission is likely to be required. Pre-application advice can be sought.

How, where & when?

How?

The project will need the right people (or group) with the right experience, motivation and funds between them, converging to take the project forwards. And the opportunity to acquire a farm, or other landholding, that is available for sale. The vision and the legal, finance and planning side can be adjusted based on the people and the site in question. Various agreements will be required, including on the management of any jointly owned land, and the process by which people can come to live, work or volunteer at the site. This is likely to evolve over time.

Where?

Anywhere in Wales – although perhaps in a location away from the busiest roads and conurbations, such as in South West, Mid or North West 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. Anyone interested in the Awen Ecovillage idea can express an interest – once there is sufficient interest, some form of social channel will be created to take the idea forwards.

How to get involved

- Subscribe to receive new posts from [Wildhousing](#)
- Express an interest in Awen Ecovillage using the [contact form](#)
- Share the Awen Ecovillage idea via friends or social media
- Take a look at [Should You Start an Intentional Community or Join One?](#)
- Landowners with suitable land available, please [get in touch](#)