

# Ecovillage Findhorn (EF) BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday 14 FEBRUARY 2024 at 16.00-17.30

Venue – Rupert’s

Present Ian C, Mari H (minutes), Rupert D and Tessa B – apologies Anni B ( and Ross J)

1. Attunement – attempts to get Ross in on WhatsApp
2. Matters arising from previous minutes - minutes once approved are posted on [www.futurefindhorn.org](http://www.futurefindhorn.org)
3. **Communications, Member Engagement, Subs, IT, etc**
  - a. Page on new NFA website needed to provide overview of EV mission. Who?
  - b. How to progress subscriptions? Subs via “Buy Me a Coffee” <20% of member, came in fast but now slow ; will offer a bank standing order option in next newsletter as alternate to BMAC digital platform. Campaigns / a volunteer to drive this specifically?
  - c. Social media - for complicated issues can be poor vs face to face. Some feedback sees recent interaction as a civil debate with genuine differences of opinion, speaking truth, and would prefer it had been left up, others upset by it. Excellent medium to get out simple short messages to many people in an informal way. Fine tune output, avoid controversy, find balance between truth telling, confronting things being hidden vs conflict escalation. Tricky!
  - d. RD unhappy with tone of recent “Landowners Meeting” which came across to him as aggressive and undermining rather than supportive. (Hence social media conflagration). How do we get to supportive, curious, meetings so people catch up rather than assume and behave aggressively – do people actually want to help for real – if so they are very welcome?
  - e. IT support - Simon Spitz – IT wizard hired, to fix mailerlite red banner warning and ongoing.
  - f. Email addresses - should we go with @findhorn.cc or @ecovillagefindhorn.uk - prefer the latter ;
  - g. Survey to ask NFA and EF members about the number of organisations they belong and subscribe to, in draft state; to go out soon to raise awareness of a possible overlaps and convergence, plus understand the costs our members are already burdened with – is there a simpler way with a unified subscription for converging orgs? - expect survey out next week.

#### 4. **LLP**

- a. Feedback circle past week; Rupert joined working group; Mari joins 6 weekly feedback gp.
- b. CAL and FF will present the Strategic framework, as published and now widely available, on Tuesday in U Hall -16.00. We will encourage our members to attend via FB (!) and Newsletter.
- c. CAL analysis emphasizes community governance convoluted complexity as a key strategic issue, a major risk and dependency (i.e. unless fixed we will find it hard to get an inspiring, unifying plan done across the site in right timing). Recommends community (Park) wide democratic governance – fixing governance enables us to reach the potential in a timely effective way. Fits with what we, governance group and others, are trying to get done.

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### 5. Investigation Park “Carry Cost” & Liability Issues

- a. We are asking Paddy to offer his “infrastructure issues at the Park” report.
- b. We are asking FF and NFD to provide detailed information about the various costs, liabilities (and income) of running the Park so community can be well-informed. Terry & Tim (FF & NFD) have pledged support to get to deep granularity on ongoing costs (> c£30K) per month. Where is the money going? Can they be reduced? If not how will community carry? Very important that community understands what it is getting itself into, but also what happens if it does not. Peter V has been very helpful on U.Hall liabilities and business activities (and has an empty office for us)

### 6. Resource Support – money & people

- a. BerryBurn grant to be further investigated - it is not only project focused
- b. Advertise in RB for volunteer/staff support. Need to build a bigger working team with time availability as 3/6 of our Board don't have. **This is at a critical point.**
- c. Raise additional funds to pay for above should we take a loan? - no conclusion yet.
- d. Share issue seems too soon (MH opinion) – is it something to consider once we have a clear deal with FF that has community wide agreement?
- e. RD opinion – we need money now and we can issue now so long as we are extremely clear about the risks and that this is essentially philanthropic to support EF at this stage and may not be returned.
- f. Do a co-raise with Ekopia if they are interested, with matching from our philanthropic source? Idea to be offered to Ekopia, not yet taken up, meeting on Feb 26<sup>th</sup>.

### 7. FF Update

- a. Options proposal (18 month timeline) was not approved by Trustees (1-2<sup>nd</sup> Feb). Disappointing to all those involved, on both sides of negotiation, of a comprehensive, sensible, staged deal.
- b. Trustees/Chair have proposed an alternate idea on a much shorter timeline with a lower price, potential, but timeline is an issue. Visibility into the carry cost of the Park and community being ready to take those (and the associated operations and maintenance) on is the key issue with the timeline. New price is attractive but timeline not (in terms of building capacity and planned staged transfer with low risk and community having time and information to decide).
- c. EF has communicated to FF we need a firm proposal, with granularity on these costs and liabilities from FF, that is pre-approved by full FF Trust Board, to present to community, so as not to squander any more time taking deals seriously (per the months that went into the Options deal).
- d. FF has agreed and will publish in RB to say more. FF has agreed to provide cost insights within c3-4 weeks. RD met FF Treasurer, flown in from Canada to get granular with Terry and NFD in same timezone. FF has appointed accountant to help.

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### 8. Organisations

- a. On Friday, land owning organisations of the Park met “to stabilise the Park” and FF took the opportunity to explain their plan to transfer to EF, including with map and timeline. Timeline especially created some upset in the orgs. But also sense of being kept in the dark.
- b. As the fresh idea (not yet a proposal with a firm number) had only just been presented to EF, it was too soon to provide any meaningful details to anyone. Atmosphere was inquisitorial vs curious (RD opinion). Levels of distrust and aggressiveness/defensiveness, followed by social media exchanges, led to a call for working in the context of restorative circle by Mari who is following up. Some organisations feel left out and we need to engage much better with them. Bandwidth has been limited due to only 2.5 working Board members for the last 3 months (Mari, Rupert, Ian). We are all in this together (all orgs) and need to work as a whole. Outreach from RD and MH to individuals and orgs to solve.
- c. NFD have infrastructure experience and cost insights. EF meeting with Tim and Mark C set up to learn more and create good collaboration, especially on carry costs. EF wants a strong transparent efficient ethical infrastructure partner which provides value for money services to community. Tim has some good ideas on how. All agreed lots of initial discovery work to be done on current under investment and liabilities, future plan of works, even before getting into new development plans. RD encouraging all infrastructure experts in Park to sit around a table with each other and not replicate work. What is the best solution?

### 9. Community Housing Trust

- a. Nicola Doctor has been in touch and a further meeting is set. CHT are well behind schedule on providing their quotation and need someone managing them.

### 10. OSCR Update

- a. Multiple drafts circulating. RD to follow up with TSI as recommended by Bill Ross of OSCR. Edward Fittell is the contact.

### 11. AOB

- a. Tessa updated on community GEN/Gaia event in the wings which we look forward to - as well as an upcoming Community Game.
- b. All activities that engage us in building a coherent field supports all our projects.
- c. We are appreciate of Innerlinks and NFA’s next step event - which is so compellingly relevant : )

12. Review of meeting: more relaxed and conversational, trust most of the detail are in these minutes

13. Dates for meetings on Wednesday afternoon until it changes

.....and Ian’s board bonding Sunday lunch with plus ones is on the 17th of March.

Postpone – office space.