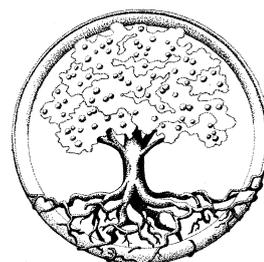


COLE STREET FARM COHOUSING COMMUNITY

THE THRESHOLD CENTRE
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NEWSLETTER – Autumn 2009

THE BIG BUILD

The builders got off to an amazingly good start, with fine weather for the first few months. Part of the brief was to re-use as much original material as possible in the renovation and it is lovely to see tiles – complete with lichen - back on the roofs. Also the new cladding on both buildings is been locally sourced larch, so no air miles there. The new septic tank biodisc installation was extraordinary to watch, with a huge digger (like something out of Thunderbirds) to get through the solid clay ground and create a huge hole for the tank. Now it is in place, with only its green lid above ground, it is difficult to recall how enormous it seemed.

Nancy was delighted with the news that her applications for grants towards the cost of the biomass system and the photovoltaics had been successful and we are all most grateful for the hard work she put in to that end. The Bio Energy Capital Grants Scheme provided £45K towards the biomass and the Low Carbon Building Programme Phase 2 £10,768 towards the photovoltaics, so a big ‘thank-you’ to them. The biomass boiler has arrived and was so exciting to watch. The huge crane needed to winch it into place stretched right across Cole St. Lane and it was a work of art to see how the crane driver managed to guide it between all the overhead cables and telegraph poles. The road had to be closed for a while, but a surprisingly short time considering the difficulty of the job. And now it is in place it is quite unobtrusive - a green container with a shiny chimney just visible above the surrounding greenery. Luckily it was a lovely day and the event was captured by many cameras. Now all the trenching is going in for services and with the wet weather the place is a morass. All our central ‘village green’ is a mud bath, but once it is over we shall have a blank canvas on which to recreate our garden.

LIVING AT THE THRESHOLD CENTRE

During September we will be finalising the allocation of the Housing Association’s rental properties. We have been oversubscribed for these spaces and have had a busy summer of meeting and getting to know our potential new neighbours. Whilst it has been lovely to discover so many people want a rental property here; it is going to be hard having to disappoint some folk.

On the other hand we do still have 2 shared ownership properties available. Whilst you still need to be on the housing register for these places; you also need to have the ability to raise a mortgage so that in effect you buy part of the house and rent the rest. The proportions are up to you!

If you are interested in living here but have been put off by the whole issue of “registering” with NDDC we would strongly encourage you to put in a call to their officer on 01258 484322 you may be pleasantly surprised by their criteria. In brief if

you have recently lost your home due to relationship break up, are moving from a low cost to high cost area or have an income of less than £60,000 you could qualify! But check it out for yourself.

The properties still available are one and two bed. They are already in existence as they are both cottages that were originally designated as holiday residences when we bought the site 4 years ago. If you have previously visited TTC the fact that we are talking about Swallows and Cartwheels may mean something to you.

Our next open afternoon to view the properties will be Sunday 18th October. Anyone interested in coming along is encouraged to contact Amanda Pearson on 01747 835633 to discuss their interest and the application process.

GARDENS

We had very good gardening/work weekends in July/August when it was great to welcome back Carole and Val who last visited us two years ago. Also with us were people who are interested in joining the community, so it was an opportunity to get to know them better in a relaxed setting. Much was achieved in the market garden with the first potatoes and onions being harvested, leaving space for more planting- leeks, carrots, beetroot and saladings. We have been enjoying the fruits of all the hard labour that has gone into the garden, particularly having somewhere to go to get away from the noise of the building work. More raised beds were created and a space was cleared and covered, with a view to creating an area for soft fruit in the autumn – at the moment taking up precious raised bed space. The weather was kind over both weekends, cloudy with some misty rain but a good temperature to work in.

The bees have also been loving the comfrey, buddleia, fennel, feverfew, marigold, nasturtium and other ornamental flowers in the productive garden, so at least we are doing our bit for the wildlife while our ‘village green’ at the farm has been turned into a muddy building site. Gay’s new porch is now topped with a living roof, planted with various types of sedum, wild garlic, poppies, marigolds, comfrey, montbretia, buttercups and daisies. The idea is that they will all seed and spread and require no maintenance. We shall see!

THRESHOLD CENTRE HELPS COHOUSING GAIN WIDER RECOGNITION

The significance of the Threshold Centre as a role model for cohousing is beginning to gain wider recognition. For example, this is the first and only mixed-tenure cohousing in the UK, ie affordable dwellings for a housing association combined with owner-occupied units. In July, Alan Heeks of the Threshold Centre and Fiona Astin of Synergy Housing Group helped to host a Round Table for other housing associations in London. They explained how this scheme had overcome various obstacles and policy restrictions.

As a follow-on to the London Round Table, the Housing Associations involved asked for a more detailed briefing on the Threshold Project: this will take the form of a one-day seminar led by Fiona Astin and Kate Aspinall of Synergy, with Alan Heeks and Amanda Pearson of the Threshold Centre.

In addition, the Threshold Centre have been asked to host a study visit in September from the Good Homes Alliance, the leading network of eco-developers, architects and other professionals. Their interest in the project is a significant accolade showing that its wider significance is being recognised.

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS – 2009/10

Cohousing Workshops :

These are residential and run from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon. They provide an opportunity for individuals or groups to experience life in a cohousing community for a weekend, at the same time learning how to go about setting up a project. They are very popular, so book early to secure a place. 2009 charges: £130 for course, lunch and evening meal. B&B £25/£35 per night, depending on location.

September 11-13: November 13-15: February 19-21.

Gardening/Work Weekends

We offer bed and board in exchange for your help and it's not all work! Arrive in time for Friday supper if you can, otherwise early on the Saturday.

October 16-19: March 12-14.

Open Afternoons for Visitors/Enquirers

These take place on the Sunday afternoon of the work weekends. A chance for enquirers and potential joiners to have a look around, ask questions about cohousing and enjoy a cup of tea.

Sundays: 2-4pm

Contact Caroline at info@thresholdcentre.org.uk or at 01747 821929 for booking form for any of the above.

Open Lunches

These take place on the **first Sunday of each month**, from 12.30-3pm. An informal gathering, a chance to look around and meet the residents. Please let us know if you would like to come, and bring vegetarian food to share.

Meditation

We hold an open meditation on **the first Thursday of each month**, from 8-9pm. Meditation and visualisation techniques suitable for all levels of experience.

It is helpful to know in advance if you would like to come to either of these events. Please ring 01747 821929, or email as above.

With best wishes from us all,

Caroline, Jane, Gay, Alan, Michael, Amanda and Peter (& Monty!), Nancy and Vita.
Not forgetting John, Andrew, Muriel and Chris.