

Kin's Domain Family Homesteads (KDFH) Project

December Newsletter 2019

Greetings!

It's been quite a while since I sent out a newsletter to keep everyone up to date with everything that's been happening with our project in the UK. However, a lot of us have been making use of our Facebook group page (*same title as above*) to share ideas and inspirations as well as through email, which has been good.

At several times this year a few of us from the core planning group have met up to discuss ideas and get down to the finer details of what really has to happen in order for a Kin's Domain community to begin in the UK.

Earlier this year I joined Mandy at a meeting with the Sustainability Officer of Frome Council to share our idea, and Mandy continued to network with others there as well as the director of a Community Land Trust that is forming. We also took part in a course for the setting up of Social Enterprises. This was indeed very useful in helping us see the potential help that is available as well as what's really involved with developing such a project. And I spent the summer months working at Paddington Farm in Glastonbury getting my hands dirty and learning as much as I could in my time there about organic food growing on a market garden plot of several acres. It was a great experience and fabulous introduction to fruit and veg growing.

We did enjoy one general group meet-up at the end of September at Paddington Farm. Some people didn't come because the weather had been rather wet that week and the forecast for the weekend was awful but in the end for most of it, it actually was fine... we even had our picnic outside! Two documentary film makers, interested in the whole Ringing Cedars Movement, joined us from London, prepared with cameras and microphone, in order to interview us just before they were heading off to Russia to film one of the largest Ringing Cedars communities there (*Photos on our Facebook page*). It was an inspiring day!

Behind the scenes our brains never stop thinking about what really needs to happen to move the project forward. I appreciate the input from Mandy, Grace, Annie and others this year, including some Ringing Cedars friends in other countries who share their inspirations and vision, as this project is much bigger than one person alone can create, unless of course, your name is Anastasia!

Unfortunately the UK doesn't seem to be the easiest country in the world to set up Kin's Domains/smallholdings/homesteads/land-based living projects - but some people and groups are managing to do it.

1. The main way that seems to open doors and gain planning consent is usually by having a viable business enterprise on the land and showing realistic reasons for having to live there. This seems to have more chance of gaining favour with local government and planners. This is the situation in the UK.
2. Another way is just to get some land, create a project on it and figure out the planning consent in a few years' time when you have a successful venture to show and hope they grant you permission.
3. If, however, an individual, family or a group has larger funds available (or even just seed money to use as a deposit) then one simple option is to buy a farmhouse which has land attached to it and simply begin.

For the third option to happen as a group, a lot would have to come together including a lot more commitment from people who say they would like to live this lifestyle and it's certainly not for the faint-hearted!

If the idea resonates then people would have to commit their time now, their time once the project begins and initial start up funding as well as ongoing funds, perhaps in the form of low rents. The whole legal structure would have to be established as well as each person's contribution and involvement from today, in order to help make it happen.

For this we would need to know

- Who is willing to put in a few hours of their time each week from seed idea to the purchase to the ongoing running of it?
- Who has funds available now and how much would you be willing to contribute/invest to the start up funds in order to buy a place and get a return later?
- Who would be happy for the project to be set up as a social enterprise, a not-for-profit, so it can continue in perpetuity (of course getting a return on investment and still passing down one's plot to descendants initially but then letting it go to other families if descendants should not be interested)?
- Who is willing to get together on a regular basis to sort out all the key foundational steps in order to make the dream a reality?

These, *and most likely a few more*, are the questions that really need to be answered before any realistic progress can further be made in the direction of setting up a group project.

The other option is to save money and one day buy your own plot and just do it. This is one way it will evolve and is already doing so around the world... people inspired by the books have been setting up their plots wherever they can.

This too is unfolding Anastasia's dream... it doesn't have to be a group effort although a lot of people would prefer to have like-minded neighbours. Eventually, one day, there may only be like-minded neighbours everywhere as the dream expands into the world.

This year I researched Wales as I'd been very interested in exploring it for a while, and discovered there are many farm houses with land available on the market and generally about a third of the price you'd see in England. I found Wales to be a lot less congested than England and certainly feels more peaceful, however the weather is slightly colder and perhaps damper than southern England. It was an interesting exercise and I enjoyed exploring Wales for over three weeks in total and seeing some beautiful places as well as meeting lots of friendly Welsh people.

To add to the mix... another little group seems to be forming within our big group that is currently exploring Portugal as a viable option (*I know it's not the UK*) as land is cheap and restrictions are few. There are already many permaculture projects and homesteads happening all over Portugal, as well as in eastern European countries. The concept is rapidly growing into reality for many people every day!

The only questions that remain (*alongside the 4 bullet point questions above should you wish to do a group*) are... what do you really want? Where do you want it? What can you contribute to your dream in terms of time, effort, money, physical and mental work? Can you see yourself doing it alone or with your family or with others? And again, if it's with others, what are you realistically willing to contribute to the idea in order to help make it a reality?

I will leave you with those thoughts to contemplate as this year of 2019 comes to a close. And should anyone wish to share the answers that come to them, your responses will be handled with complete confidentiality but will be invaluable in helping us decide what our next steps, as a group, will be.

I Wish you and your loved ones a very peaceful and nourishing end to the year. May you feel refreshed, inspired and excited for 2020 and all that will unfold in your own life and with regard to the Kin's Domain vision around the world.

With blessings and warmest wishes,

Michael Angelo