

Community Engagement Meeting – How Lammas Becomes a Really Good Neighbour

Cyfarfod Cymunedol –
Sut y bydd Lammas yn dyfod yn gymydog arbennig o dda

Report of workshop

2nd October 2010



Dialogue by Design Ltd
Ambassador House
Brigstock Road
Thornton Heath
Surrey
CR7 7JG

020 8683 6602

www.dialoguebydesign.net

Index

1	<i>Introduction</i>	3
2	<i>Focus of the Community Engagement Event</i>	3
3	<i>Lammas – Introduction & Update – Presentation by Paul Wimbush</i>	5
4	<i>Lammas as Neighbours – the Practice</i>	5
5	<i>Getting back to basics – what’s great about living here?</i>	7
6	<i>The Way Forward</i>	8
7	<i>Reflection</i>	9

1 Introduction

The Lammas Low Impact Community recently attained planning permission to build an ecovillage in SW Wales, which combines the traditional smallholding model with the latest innovations in environmental design, green technology and permaculture.

The proposal is for a new settlement of 9 eco-smallholdings, a campsite and a community hub building. It is sited on 76 acres of mixed pasture and woodland next to the village of Glandwr, Pembrokeshire. Construction began in the autumn of 2009. Lammas aims to establish a thriving example of low-impact development, providing an educational resource pointing the way for truly sustainable rural developments of the future.

Lammas was successful in 2009 in a bid to receive funding through the Low Carbon Communities Challenge, sponsored by the Department of Energy and Climate Change. The funding they have been awarded is to enable construction of the Hub building. This multi-functional facility will provide a platform from which the project can research, promote and inspire people about low-impact development and permaculture. It will also be an administrative and social centre for the development, housing the office, meeting room, fully certified kitchen and cafe. The various employed staff will be based here. The building will also act as a service hub for the adjacent seasonal campsite. The campsite's primary role is to provide accommodation for working guests and people attending courses at Lammas.

As well as providing financial support to successful LCCC communities, DECC is involving the groups in a strand of research comprising co-inquiry and shared learning. An independent facilitator has been nominated to work with each LCCC group, to help the groups develop engagement and action plans which will assist them to realise the effective delivery of technical aspects of their projects and the wider potential of each project to reduce CO2 emissions in the "local community" and in communities of interests, by engaging with people so they change their understanding, attitudes and behaviour.

The workshop described in this report is part of the planned approach to engagement being adopted by Lammas. The event was independently facilitated by Catrin Ellis Jones on behalf of Dialogue by Design.

This report is a write up of the worksheets and flipcharts produced by people attending the Lammas Community Engagement Event, on 2nd October 2010.

The contributions described in this report will assist Lammas to consider the point of view of neighbours as Lammas' development continues, and will be taken into account when designing activities to engage with and include neighbours / fellow residents of Glandwr in the future. This report will be available on the Lammas web-site: www.lammas.org.uk

2 Focus of the Community Engagement Event

The overarching **purpose** of the meeting was

- to explore together how Lammas can develop a "really good neighbour" relationship with people living and working in Glandwr, and the surrounding area.

This involved:

- Updating participants on developments which have occurred at Lammas over the last six months or so. Briefly reporting on recent visits and sharing the feedback received from local people and others from further afield (including the Senedd!) following their visits.
- Exploring what neighbours and others nearby have felt during the development process of Lammas, and what could have been done differently or better in order to improve their experiences then, and in the future
- Exploring together what makes this part of SW Wales, near Glandwr, a great home and exploring what this means in terms of how residents (and local workers) appreciate the place
- Identifying shared values, common appreciation of place, common aspirations and seeking opportunities to strengthen these shared values.

Programme

Time	Session aim	Detail
1200	Refreshments available in the Yurt – Lunches sold by local group Live Lightly!	
1400	Welcome and introductions	Ayres Gipson welcomed the group gathered in his poly tunnel. Catrin Ellis Jones, Facilitator introduces the purpose of the meeting and the working method and invited people to introduce each other.
Part 1- Introduction & what's happened so far?		
1415	How Lammas got here, and what's been going on over the last few months	<p>Paul Wimbush described in brief the history of Lammas, its struggle to gain planning permission, the changes that have resulted locally following the groups installation on site, and how Lammas has attempted in the past to engage directly with local people. Some of the highlights of the past year were summarised, including the very supportive feedback from people attending open days and other events.</p> <p>He outlined some of the challenges facing the group in the future and also the shared desire among the Lammas households to evolve and develop as considerably as possible, taking participants' advice and insights on board.</p>
Part 2 – Lammas as Neighbours – the practice		
1430	Issues, and things that could have been done better	<p>Group work.</p> <p>What has been a problem for you, in terms of having Lammas nearby? Any ideas how to avoid similar problems in the future?</p>
Part 3 – Getting back to basics		
1500	Appreciative enquiry	<p>Group work</p> <p>What's really great about living in / near Glandwr?</p>
1530	Feedback	Sharing thoughts on some of the themes and values emerging from the previous session
Part 4 – The way forward		
1545	Workshop session What happens next?	Any ideas given the conversations we've had today, what would you like to see happening next? Practical ideas for projects, collaborative initiatives etc., how these ideas might be taken forward (I imagine this will be fairly short, but people might say they would like to come to another open day in a few months to see progress, get another newsletter(s) to stay updated, when you are ready to house stuff in the hub, have the option to ask for a specific course etc.)
1600	Review and evaluation	<p>In plenary, can we ask you how you felt about Lammas before; and how you feel now.</p> <p>Reflect on these two (similar / differences. Why?)</p> <p>Invite people to fill in evaluation form if they want.</p>
1610	Close	<p><i>Paul Wimbush thanked everyone for coming, and for their contributions!</i></p> <p><i>Those interested signed up to receive the report resulting from the workshop. A summary will also be included in the next local newsletter.</i></p>

Who took part

The event was advertised in the local newspaper (Western Telegraph), and on the local radio (Radio Pembrokeshire). Posters were also placed in Glandwr and Crymych. 80 leaflets were distributed to the closest neighbours and the event was promoted at the local produce show and amongst local groups.

Many if not all participants attended the open day at Lammas on the Saturday morning, preceding this event. In all, some 100 people came to the open day.

Approximately 25 people attended the workshop session, including 6 people from the Lammas Community. The workshop was informal, with people forming four groups of between 5 and 7 people. There were a few very close neighbours attending the workshop, and others from within a few miles including a retired native of Glandwr, who recalls working on the land in the past, and who enjoyed talking to interested new residents about the old names of individual fields, and other passing traditions. More people were from further afield, including some volunteers helping the development at Lammas, and a couple from New Zealand with an interest and considerable knowledge of an established eco-community in S Australia.

The workshop was intended to get feedback specifically from local people, those of Glandwr or other neighbouring communities. Those working groups which contained either a minority or complete absence (in one case) of local people answered the questions – particularly question 1 and 2 – based less on their own experience of Lammas, if it was only rather limited, and more on what they perceived or observed.

3 Lammas – Introduction & Update – Presentation by Paul Wimbush

'Following the granting of planning permission 14 months ago Lammas has been busy installing the basic infrastructure systems for the project. That which was grazed fields is being transformed to the mosaic of habitats, and structures that will comprise this pioneering ecovillage. Over the summer Lammas have hosted 9 open days and have given guided tours to approximately 1100 people. The feedback from these tours has been overwhelmingly positive. A summary of the feedback received will shortly be posted on our web site. Simultaneously we have hosted approximately 250 volunteers and have delivered a range of courses (including permaculture courses, natural building courses and others).

We have nine families living here now and are making every effort to integrate with local people. We recognise that we are a new presence in this landscape and are very keen to hear how it has been, and is, for you.'

4 Lammas as Neighbours – the Practice

The first working session aimed to gather the thoughts of participants regarding what it is like to be living next to new neighbours, Lammas.

Problem / difficulty / issue that you experience / perceive as a result of Lammas being nearby	Opportunity / idea for improving the situation
Anhawster / mater sy'n peri ofn oherwydd sefydliad Lammas yn agos atoch chi	Syniad / cyfle i wella'r sefyllfa
Visitors turning up at the wrong place	Better directions – signposts in strategic places in Glandwr and at cross-roads
Improving access for all, including disabled people	Perhaps adopt some sort of "blue badge" system? Disabled access to amenities / facilities? Ways in which disabled people can take part (e.g. creating raised beds....)
Increased traffic in what was a very quiet village	Manage visiting traffic – maybe through organising a shared travel or minibus system

Problem / difficulty / issue that you experience / perceive as a result of Lammas being nearby Anhawster / mater sy'n peri ofn oherwydd sefydliad Lammas yn agos atoch chi	Opportunity / idea for improving the situation Syniad / cyfle i wella'r sefyllfa
Creating relationships	Organise some celebrations
Lammas [not] making contact with the people in the village	Local newsletter?
It's not actually possible to purchase produce	Have an honesty box at the bottom of the track? Before the hub is open? Even after the hub is open?
There is a perception that local people are not involved / included	Increase involvement in local community – e.g. WI, sell produce in local shops, get to know local pubs, chapel, school, Welsh Language classes and other Welsh medium events.
Sharing of resources, can cause tension – specifically water supply	Dialogue with immediate neighbour over water
In the beginning: Perception were: there will be too much traffic, not enough spring water. Fear of change. Creation of problems which aren't there: "What if...." (fear of the unknown) Potential for resentment regarding Planning Permission – Lammas got Planning Permission when locals can't for bungalows. Constitution / How planning happened	Now: Everyone is much happier Lammas has proved that those "fearful potential situations" aren't a reality. Good, friendly, neighbourly feelings exist. The Lammas residents are friends with immediate neighbours. Arrange to give a talk, which will be of specific interest to local people (addressing as many local concerns / queries about planning as Lammas are qualified to) about TAN6 and Policy 52.

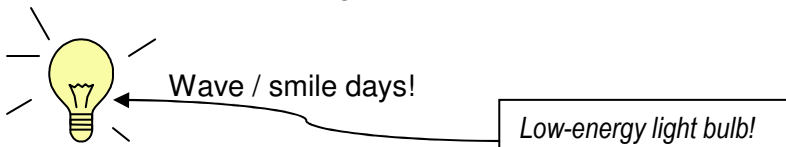
Plenary discussion and Feedback

Plenary discussion following this session considered how, initially it might be good for Lammas to consider going to the local community rather than focusing everything on site. The importance of making contacts [physically] in the village was raised by more than one group.

They suggested using existing village facilities, including the Chapel and the pub. Adopting an informal approach like having a stall at the local market and having an honesty box at the bottom of the drive into Lammas were also offered as ways of creating opportunities for "light-touch" engagement with local people.

Emerging from this session was the idea to adopt some kind of blue badge scheme [bathodyn glas!] to enable access, and to extend a scheme of the kind, to enable less-able-bodied people to participate in some of the activities and "doing" going on at Lammas

5 Getting back to basics – what’s great about living here?

<p>What’s really good about being a resident of this area? Beth sydd orau yn eich barn chi am fod yn drigolyn yn y fro?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh air • Quiet • Views • Owls • Local people supporting local people • The lifestyle this place supports • Welsh pace of life • History of the landscape • Cultural history
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendliness of locals • Welsh culture • Landscape • Strong sense of community in the area • A place where new things are happening
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land use change from sheep → environmentally sound, more productive, financially viable use • More guardians of the land – managing the woodlands & waterways • Beautiful spot, landscape • Income for locals – work on hub, courses, digger work • Lammas educational example, bridge to have global impact • Sustainability – this is often a conceptual notion, jargon..... • But Lammas is providing a real example of economic and living sustainability • Quiet, no traffic • Children are free to play, cycle • Millpond, wildlife • Rural community, living close to the land • Living near like-minded people, sharing skills and knowledge • Water
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quality of life: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ safety (personal, property) ✓ Waving neighbourly greetings ✓ Helpful neighbours ✓ Sincerity ✓ Healthy community • History to connect with, and traditional connection with the landscape • Gorgeous landscape, magical light over the Preseli Mountains • Vast, intact natural landscape • “Doing” on the land / an active connection • Option of less “mechanised”, “outsourced” living <p>Doing & integration </p>

Plenary discussion and Feedback

People here commented on the healthy community of which they felt a part (or perceived) – one where people know one another, and have a sincere interest in one another, as opposed to a sort of “nosey” inquisitiveness.

Another theme that several of the groups explored was of the link between generations following on, and the continuing relationship with the land itself – that the landscape is not just incidental, not an abstract backdrop to life, but part of it. People talked about “doing” together – citing examples of the work opportunities created at Lammas through the hub building programme – and comparing this unifying quality of work to chores shared “in the old days”, like hay-baling and other labour-intensive, seasonal tasks.

6 The Way Forward

What can we do together to celebrate these features of local life, or to enhance understanding or stewardship of them? Beth fedrwn wneud gyda'n glyd i ddathlu'r agweddau hyn o fywyd lleol neu hybu dealltwriaeth / cadwraeth ohonynt?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature walk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Wildlife – Wild food • Celebration for local people at Hub – let them know how they can use it too • Permaculture local – talk in vestry • Willow talk – skill-share • Produce share – produce shows!! • Harvest festival • Work day exchange 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate individual relationships, getting to know neighbours naturally, over time • Sharing of skills • Barn dances – organised locally / jointly • Church • Language • Co-operative initiatives 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barn dance • Beer festival • Craft workshops : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – baskets / pottery – Small-holding skills – Greenhouse gardening • How to grow • Social evenings – film nights 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal / individual – consciously make an effort e.g. to smile and wave • Celebrating history • Landscape • Produce show & harvest supper 	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <p>“Doing” links these two elements –horse-logging, scything, painting / photo gallery (ppl in Glandwr do photos)</p> </div>

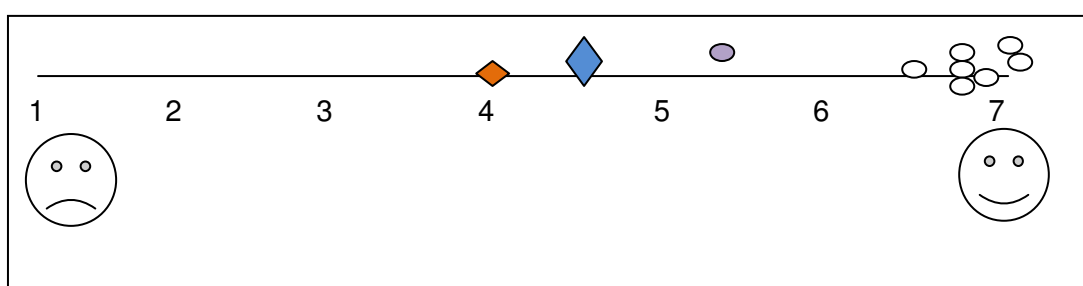
- Seasonal meal to share:
 - Michaelmas
 - Christmas
 - Easter

7 Reflection

To conclude, participants were asked to make a mark on two scales to indicate how they felt about Lammas before, and how they felt after the workshop:

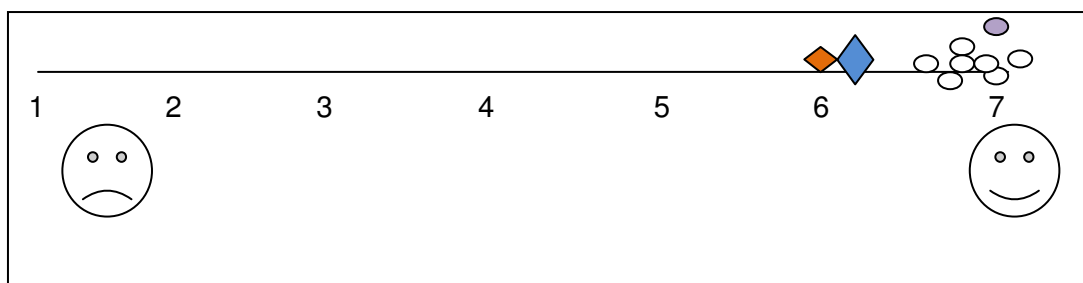
How would you describe your attitude before today to having Lammas as a neighbour / in the locality?

Beth oedd eich barn cyn heddiw am gael Lammas yn y fro / yn gymydog cyfagos?



Following today's meeting how would you describe your attitude to having Lammas as a neighbour / in the locality?

Ar ol heddiw, beth yw eich barn gael Lammas yn y fro / yn gymydog cyfagos?



Only people not directly associated with Lammas took part in this reflection exercise. Looking at the "before" and "after" lines in plenary, those whose marks on the before line were in the neither happy nor unhappy to moderately happy areas (scoring between 4 and 6) said that their opinions had shifted now, because any misgivings or nervousness they had before had now largely been dispelled.