

BIOSPHERE COMMUNITIES CONNECT

CELEBRATING TEN YEARS OF COMMUNITIES LIVING
AND WORKING SUSTAINABLY WITHIN THE BIOSPHERE



GREEN PIONEERS
TEN CASE STUDIES

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designation, awarded in 2002 to North Devon’s Biosphere celebrates the unique inter-connectedness of human settlements and nature that has evolved over millennia and continues to develop in Northern Devon.

The ten case studies have been compiled with the support of the Big Lottery’s ‘Communities Living Sustainably’ programme, to demonstrate the diverse ways in which communities and enterprises are organising themselves to interact with their local environment and pioneer more sustainable forms of living for the future.

Each of them exemplifies the different ways to get involved and be an active custodian of our world-class environment.

Michael Winter

CHAIR BIOSPHERE RESERVE PARTNERSHIP

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INTRODUCTION TO THE NORTH DEVON BIOSPHERE RESERVE

World Biosphere Reserves designated by UNESCO are a unique network of globally important special places for people and nature. They are created to protect the biological and cultural diversity of a region while promoting sustainable economic development.

The whole of northern Devon is a Biosphere Reserve because of its special landscapes and wildlife areas, rich cultural heritage and engaged communities. It is one of 610 designated worldwide and is twinned with the Malindi-Watamu Biosphere Reserve on the Kenyan coast.

Biosphere Reserves are places of cooperation, education and research where local communities, environmental groups, and economic interests can work collaboratively on conservation and development issues.

Where is North Devon's Biosphere?

North Devon's Biosphere Reserve's area is based on the catchments of the Rivers Taw and Torridge and the north Devon coast. Known also as a river ecosystem, the river catchments extend from Dartmoor and Exmoor down to the estuary and ultimately to the marine area beyond Lundy Island.



The core area of the Biosphere is Branton Burrows and is one of the UK's most spectacular dune systems. Other Biosphere habitats include a rocky foreshore, mud and sand flats, salt marshes of various types, lowland farmland, ancient and semi natural woodland, grazing marsh and coastal heath and the enigmatic Culm grasslands. Collectively these areas support iconic species such as otters, red deer, salmon and thousands of wading birds and numerous species of butterfly.

What does it do?

The Biosphere is unique in England, as the first area to be identified by UNESCO. As a 'living laboratory' for demonstrating innovative approaches to sustainable development the Biosphere aims to promote and support projects and initiatives that are world-class.

By working in partnership with local authorities, environmental agencies, farmers and landowners it promotes innovative land management and restoration projects.

With schools, colleges, universities, the U3A, arts organizations and other community groups it offers access to the Biosphere as a learning environment.

It encourages communities and local businesses to actively adapt to and prevent climate change, to develop sustainable local economies and act as custodians of the special environments that we are proud to share.

Its unique features are:

- The Biosphere covers 3300 square kilometres and is home to over 150,000 people.
- The North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a nationally important landscape covering the coastal area.
- Exmoor National Park and Dartmoor National Park are also of national importance, the landscape setting and special qualities of which are protected. The Dark Sky Reserve on Exmoor National Park is the first of its kind in Europe.
- The area includes; 63 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, 671 County Wildlife Sites and four Local Nature Reserves.
- The United Kingdom's first Marine Nature Reserve is around Lundy and a Voluntary Marine Conservation Area exists from Croyde to Hangman Point in Exmoor.
- The river Torridge catchment area is identified as a Nature Improvement Area to restore it towards an integrated network of wildlife-rich habitats.
- River Taw Improvement Project is a project restoring the quality of the river and its native fish population.
- The Tarka Trail is the gateway to the Biosphere Reserve. Its combined cycleway and longer footpath trail give the traveller easy access to the hidden corners of the Biosphere Reserve.





- **Project Team:** Forches Growers - community lead Carol Lewis.
- **Number of People Engaged:** Fifty approximately.
- **Project Partners:** North Devon Homes, Activist Pharmaceuticals Ltd, Atlas Packaging, Grow@Jigsaw, NHS Devon.
- **Social Benefits:** The garden offers a source of healthy food, green exercise and forms a social hub where people can gather and relax or learn together.
- **Economic Benefits:** Fresh produce is available to anyone in return for time spent gardening, reducing the cost of healthy food.
- **Environmental Benefits:** The site was regenerated from an area of wasteland into the diverse and abundant garden, and gardening methods are as organic as possible.



"The garden project gives people the confidence to learn and grow together, we're here for a brighter future and we want to say Yes! to people who so often hear no."

"Everything needs nurturing, at the garden we're growing people as well as plants."

A greenspace in the heart of the Forches housing estate in Barnstaple where community members can come and learn, grow healthy food and to relax.

The Forches Community Garden is one of three community gardens in Barnstaple in the **North Devon Homes Seeds for Change programme**. The land for the garden, formally derelict gardens was gifted by North Devon Homes to be used by the community in 2009. With a committed and passionate community support worker and dedicated team of volunteers, the site has been turned into a thriving and abundant garden, with communal raised beds, an orchard, and plenty of space to relax and socialize.

The garden is cared for by a host of different groups, including the **Saturday morning children's Gardening Club** for 7 to 11 year olds, parents and young children, and the young community enterprise project – which sees young people collect and turn surplus produce into chutneys and preserves to sell in the community centre and local sheltered housing.

Many volunteers have received training in a variety of new skills, with funding received from the Big Lottery and HogCo paying for training in areas such as machinery use, composting and chutney making, and ongoing training, support and advice from consultant gardener Colin Porter, whose valuable involvement in the gardens is funded by Activist Pharmaceuticals Ltd. The project also works closely with the **Grow@Jigsaw project** where they have been given space to grow seedlings for the garden and also receive training.

The garden project has received recognition for its achievements both in the social and horticultural realms, having been shortlisted for 'Best Impact on Residents' and 'Best Impact on the Community' in the National Housing Federation Awards 'What we are Proud of', as well as growing prize winning onions and displaying produce at the North Devon Show and RHS Rosemore.

The garden aims to be as environmentally sustainable as possible, limiting the amount of water used and adopting chemical free gardening techniques wherever possible.

Plans for the future are to become a sustainable community social agriculture enterprise, producing vegetable boxes to sell locally at affordable prices, offering healthy food with a low carbon footprint to all in the community.



CASE STUDY: 2
THE WHOLELIFE PROJECT



- Project Team: **Matt and Emma Burridge.**
- Number of People Engaged: **25 per week.**
- Social Benefits: **Giving clients a sense of purpose and belonging, and providing a fresh place to learn new skills, both horticultural and social skills.**
- Economic Benefits: **By training young people and offering qualifications, their chances of finding employment and being able to support themselves is greatly increased.**
- Environmental Benefits: **Wholelife aims to use the most ecological friendly products and growing techniques and to be as carbon neutral as possible.**



"Wholelife provides a rare safe place where there's no peer pressure to be cool, people are free to be who they want to be and live to their greatest potential, to feel a sense of belonging and fulfillment."

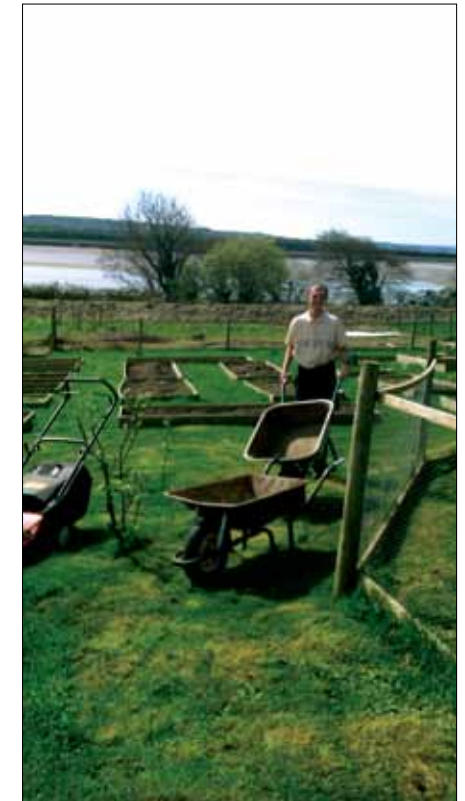
"You can come here and have a purpose, you work hard and see the results of your work later in the cycle of things."

A smallholding on the outskirts of Barnstaple which provides placements for adults and young people with social, emotional, behavioural and learning disabilities, offering them opportunities to learn new skills and gain confidence.

The Wholelife project is a not for profit organization which was set up in 2008 from a desire to provide practical and outdoor placements for young people and adults with social, emotional, behavioural and learning disabilities. The project aims to give people from all backgrounds the opportunity to engage in activities that stimulate, educate and enable them to live a more fulfilled life. Activities are based around horticulture and caring for animals on the smallholding, and encourage an attitude of respect, tolerance, courtesy and kindness. Matt and Emma draw out unique skills and interests in every client, creating a placement that suits the needs and abilities of each individual. Clients arrive at the Wholelife project from a range of backgrounds, many are referred by social services, schools and supported living schemes.

Placements for young people are based around training and qualifications, enabling people who have left school without qualifications to gain certificates and experience. As well as these skills and experience, the therapeutic and social benefits of the project are hugely significant. Many of the clients arrive at Wholelife with little confidence, never having been given the opportunity to feel their worth or thrive. Matt and Emma are able to see ability (not disability) and potential in everybody which gives rise to more confident and responsible people. Placements typically last one or two years, giving the clients consistency and the chance to see the rewards of their labour as the seeds they have nurtured grow.

Produce is given to those who have grown it, giving them free access to fresh and healthy food without any food miles and any surplus is sold at the local farmers market, or to restaurants. The site aims to be as environmentally sustainable as possible. It is totally off-grid, using wood fuel to heat the office and tea shed, and the water supply is from rainwater collected and stored in a 7000 litre storage tank. The Wholelife project also produces charcoal from sustainably coppiced local woodlands.



CASE STUDY: 3 BEAFORD ARTS

/ www.beaford-arts.org.uk/



- Project Team: **Seven.**
- Number of People Engaged: **Event average sixty.**
- Social Benefits: **To improve access to excellent arts opportunities for people in rural areas.**
- Economic Benefits: **Financially accessible art and cultural events for rural communities.**
- Environmental Benefits: **Working in partnership with Julies Bicycle to reduce environmental impact.**



*"One of the best rural arts centres in the country with specialist studio spaces and equipment."
Phil Creek, DES Adviser for Art and Design - Gifted and Talented.*

*"I loved it, the audience loved it – it's the best feedback we've ever had from a gig."
Bryony - Community promoter.*

Beaford Arts has been working to provide access to high quality arts experiences in rural areas for over 45 years. Working closely with artists, volunteers, teachers and others, Beaford work across the 1350 square miles of the Biosphere.

Extraordinary events in unexpected places:

Beaford commissions, presents and promotes events in rural north Devon communities. Annual spring and autumn seasons of performance, music, dance and comedy are run with the help of over thirty teams of local volunteers who work alongside the Beaford team.

A study carried out by sustainability experts **Julie's Bicycle** showed that by taking touring artists to rural audiences, Beaford events reduce total travel emissions of artists and audiences by a third, in comparison to a 'single central show' in a town.

Beaford events are held in some of the most beautiful landscapes, historical towns and villages. Hosting events at the heart of communities, helps sustain those communities and builds long lasting networks of volunteers.

An endless tapestry of rural north Devon:

In 1972, photographer James Ravilious took on a commission from Beaford Arts' founding director to "show north Devon people to themselves". Seventeen years and more than 70,000 images later, James' Beaford Archive had become what the Royal Photographic Society called "a unique body of work, unparalleled at least in this country for its scale and quality".

The Beaford Archive is a vital resource for preserving the history of north Devon families, communities and sustainable land conservation for future generations. A selection of images are available to view at: www.beafordarchive.org.uk

Creative learning in a unique environment:

Every year, over a thousand people participate in residential courses, taking part in a wide spectrum of arts activities.

Beaford has an established reputation for delivering excellence in arts education for schools. Beaford work to enhance education in rural primary schools by developing partnerships with key organisations and enabling projects like **Confluence** – a groundbreaking digital arts, technology and environment project based around the River Torridge, with University of Plymouth's i-DAT (Institute of Digital Arts and Technology), the North Devon Biosphere Foundation and Appledore Arts.

Beaford education aims to provide children with an understanding of the environment and how to work in partnership with it. Courses like 'Art and the Outdoors' and 'The Four Rs' are designed to broaden children's knowledge of sustainable living.



CASE STUDY: 4 YARDE ORCHARD

/ www.yarde-orchard.co.uk / telephone: 01805 601 778 /



- **Project Team:** Five employees.
- **Number of People Engaged:** 2500 annually.
- **Social Benefits:** To promote cycling and eco-tourism.
- **Economic Benefits:** Community income generation.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Geography and environmental education, sourcing local food, customer service, wood skills, charcoal making, countryside management.



"Our location on the Tarka Trail and Devon Coast to Coast cycle route is central to the sustainability of our enterprise as the majority of our clients are able to arrive and depart by bicycle, with those from further afield often coming to Devon by public transport."

"Financially and ecologically, our enterprise is founded on the renewable resources on the doorstep – solar heat, coppiced woodfuel from the trailside, rainwater from our roofs, apples from the orchard, glorious food from local producers and the skills and commitment of local people."

Yarde Orchard offers a sustainable setting for cyclists and walkers on the Tarka Trail as well as a convivial gathering place for local people and live music events. Our facilities include local-food café-bar, green bunkhouse, yurts, camping field, outdoor kitchen and clay oven.

Yarde Orchard began life as a cyclists café on the Tarka Trail in 2002. Using a reclaimed chicken shack sited in a neglected orchard, the café became popular with local cyclists, coast to coast riders and holidaymakers. Offering home made goodies, fairtrade teas and coffees, organic soft drinks and local ice cream the café was equally renowned for it's fine compost toilet. Touring cyclists passing through were often seeking accommodation without having to deviate from the traffic-free trail environment. This provided the impetus for the addition of a green bunkhouse in 2007, a timber building incorporating solar and woodfuel heating, recycled newspaper insulation, reedbed waste water treatment and rainwater harvesting. Further demand for green accommodation led to the addition of three yurts and a small camping field.

A premises licence was granted in 2009 enabling us to offer local ales and ciders with live music events at weekends and community film shows by the woodburner on winter nights.

Yarde Orchard is part of a growing network of sustainable organisations and businesses in North Devon. This includes the [North Devon Biosphere Reserve](#) who have encouraged and facilitated the project from it's inception, leading to a recent management agreement allowing us to regenerate old trailside coppice for our woodfuel supply while enhancing trailside habitat. "Jolly Gardener" only half a mile up the road provides organic salad leaves, soft fruits, flowers and delicious home-made jams and chutneys. Torrington butcher, Steve Gladwin offers exclusively Devon raised quality meat, while equally close, Dunstaple Farm supply their own excellent ice creams at reasonable prices. Casks of magnificent Forge Brewery ales from Hartland are normally lined up on the bar top along with our own Yarde fermented cider.

Very little of our budget is spent on advertising as we have been fortunate in establishing links with a number of ecotourism writers and websites. A key Observer article in 2008 by ecotourism journalist Catherine Mack was enormously helpful in launching the new bunkhouse, while the [greentraveller.co.uk](#) website, the Independent Hostel Guide and the newly launched [bedsforcyclists.co.uk](#) site all enable travellers to use our services without incurring commission charges. Achieving the 2010 "Sustainable Devon" award from [Devon Environmental Business Initiatives \(DEBI\)](#) also brought welcome exposure

Disseminating ideas about sustainable practice often happens informally over pizzas and pints in the café where the pitfalls and practicalities of woodfuel, solar hot water, rainwater harvesting, reedbeds and sustainable building materials are discussed. Working with landscape designer and woodsman Simeon Day we are developing a programme of rural skills courses with a strong sustainability theme covering clay oven building, charcoal making, cider making and green woodworking. In common with the underlying ethos of Yarde Orchard, the theme of these courses is developing the skills to be more self-reliant by applying the key principles of simplicity, sustainable resource use and creating with others in a convivial setting.



CASE STUDY: 5
THE YARNER TRUST



- **Project Team:** Full and part time staff, interns, trustees volunteers and sessional workers.
- **Number of People Engaged:** 900 annually.
- **Social Benefits:** Community cohesion.
- **Economic Benefits:** Employment opportunities in environmental sector.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Low ecological impact.



“The Yarner Trust has provided me with a broad foundation of skills and knowledge which has given me the confidence to construct a low impact ecological dwelling. I am immensely grateful for having been offered this opportunity.”

“I have been teaching at Yarner for six years and during this time I have been fortunate to share with the community my passions and also I have benefitted enormously from integrating into Yarner’s wider community network of practitioners, students, volunteers, staff etc.”

The Yarner Trust provides information, advice and practical training in the skills needed to live a sustainable life through a comprehensive education programme that engages diverse audiences by providing workshops, activities, residential courses and ongoing dialogue.

A charity set up originally in conjunction with The Dartington Hall Trust, Yarner in North Devon has for more than thirty years offered training in sustainable living with a special focus relating to small scale organic self-reliance.

The Yarner Trust offers an extensive programme of:

Adult Courses: Yarner facilitates over forty courses throughout the year. The course programme offers the flexibility to enable learners to embrace key areas of sustainable living either through one off participation or by a series of complimentary training. The core areas of the programme focus on systems of food production (forest gardens, cheese and bread making, brewing, conserving, bushcraft, foraging, smallholding), ecological building (straw-bale, green oak timber frame, lime rendering, yurt making, thatching), wildlife conservation (woodland management, natural beekeeping, and craftsmanship (basket making, rush bags, stained glass, blacksmithing, mosaics, embroidery)



Outreach Programmes: Yarner offers regular subsidised family Activity Days and Schools programmes which offer exciting and unique series of workshops for the whole family to come and enjoy. Adults and children can choose from living history (Tudor) activities, creative crafts or forest skills and as well as being fun and educational, the underlying aim is to inspire families to share experiences, build stronger family bonds and, as a result, learn to work more harmoniously together.

All the activities we offer are led by our own team of highly experienced crafts men and women who are all deeply passionate about inspiring each visitor to lead a more sustainable and creative life.

Summer Camps: Every year Yarner offers families from around the country the chance to set up camp and enjoy a week of outdoor activities including bushcraft, storytelling, arts and crafts, drama, yoga, clowning, theatre and wild food cooking. This year, the annual environmental arts summer camp will run from the 5th to the 12th of August.

Yarner Networks: Yarner’s ongoing success is enhanced through working relationships with local communities, regional and national organisations. In the last year Yarner have worked in partnership with BBC, Resurgence Trust, Devon Wildlife Trust, Outdoor Classroom.

CASE STUDY: 6 GROW@JIGSAW

/ telephone: 01237 479 762 /



"I have been a single mum for eight years and have spent the majority of this time on state benefits. When you have been out of work for a period of time it is very hard to get a job as there are always other applicants with recent experience, qualifications or complete work history. The single mum status also has connotations of possible unreliability during employment."

"Through volunteering at Grow@Jigsaw I have been able to establish a consistent work history and have gained knowledge, skills and training which no doubt will be attractive to future employers. This has improved my self esteem and I have become more motivated as I have something purposeful to do."

"I've learnt a lot since coming here. We had a big garden when I was a child and then again when I was married. But no veg, just grass. Coming back to it is brilliant and I've started digging the garden at home now too - I was digging until it went dusky yesterday. I'm doing the same as I do up at the allotment. I'm always learning now. It's part of my recovery - because I'm not sat at home, there's something important to do. I like it. I guess it's job satisfaction really."

The Grow@Jigsaw Project is a horticultural social enterprise based at a commercial glasshouses in Victoria Park, Bideford. The project provides training and real work experience for vulnerable and isolated people within a horticulture and food production environment.

- **Project Team:** Two full time staff.
- **Number of People Engaged:** 25 beneficiaries weekly.
- **Social Benefits:** Improved employability, peer support network, educational continuity.
- **Economic Benefits:** Income generation for long term unemployed.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Enhanced biodiversity, composting, rainwater harvesting.

The **Grow@Jigsaw** Project is part of Community Projects North Devon, a local charitable organisation helping vulnerable people. **Grow@Jigsaw** provides the opportunity by creating a real work environment for people to get real work experiences as part of their individual development plan. The project's success in encouraging people into employment or further training is impressive as it does not lose sight of its customers expectations and succeeds by delivering the best quality product at the right price.

Over the years **Grow@Jigsaw** has developed into a viable Social Enterprise - that means that the project now generates most of its income by some form of trading through selling produce to various local organisations and individuals - a local café, market stalls and selling directly from their site to the public. There is also a basic gardening qualification for volunteers.

The project enjoys the support of the wider local community through extensive lobbying and campaigning. Excellent relations exist between the **Grow@jigsaw** and Probation, PCT, Town Council and other local agencies.

The initiative works from Monday to Friday, and has volunteers working each day, drawn from the local residents around the Park, people on probation, CVS referrals, people with special needs and more. They are referred from a range of agencies, and also just drop-in due to the project's central location. Currently there is a waiting list for people that want to volunteer!

When people approach Jigsaw, staff have an induction interview with them to
(A) understand what the person hopes to get out of volunteering and...
(B) understand what special needs (if any) the person has while they are volunteering.

Grow@jigsaw is considered a beacon project for engaging with the local community.



CASE STUDY: 7
 THE COSYHOME COMPANY

/ www.cosyhomecompany.co.uk / telephone: 0845 347 9367 /



- **Project Team:** Mukti Mitchell, Paul Dickinson, Will Stevens, Karen Jaynes, Will Willby, Matthew Tanner.
- **Number of People Engaged:** To date - twenty houses per year.
- **Social Benefits:** Preserving the unique character of period homes, making more historic buildings liveable, maximizing the comfort for homeowners.
- **Economic Benefits:** High return on investment and reduced energy for householders, employment of local people in a new field with increasing demand.
- **Environmental Benefits:** The reduction of carbon emissions, low embodied energy, preserves historic building fabric, reduces use of new materials, reduces need for new housing.



"We are thrilled with the CosyGlazing! It has quite transformed our lives. As I hoped it would. The windows are very discreet, good looking and do the job brilliantly. Thank you so much!"

"I had CosyGlazing installed a year ago and my gas bills for this year for this year have been lower than they were seven years ago."

The CosyHome Company Specialises in insulation for period properties. The Company offers an initial package of window, draught and loft insulation reducing heat loss in the home by around one third.

Nearly half of British Homes are over one hundred years old and their owners often believe that there is little they can do to reduce their high heating costs. It is not always possible to find builders or craftspeople with a strong understanding of insulation techniques combined with the skill levels required to install in retain the original beauty of period homes.

To combine these skills and knowledge, **CosyHome Company** was established in 2010. Since then heating cost have risen by 10% per year and in 2010 the average British home owner spent £1,300 on heating. Assuming the same rate of inflation, this will rise to £3,400 per year by 2020. CosyHome's initial package consisting of windows, draught and loft insulation represents a financial return of over 20% per year.

Many home owners are satisfied with their old windows and have no wish to see them thrown away. **English Heritage** recommends keeping as much historic building fabric as possible. They state that most old timber is more durable than modern equivalents and old glass has better light transmission qualities (it transmits closer to the colours you would see with the naked eye, than new glass). Owners of listed buildings also find that double glazings not normally permitted by conservation authorities.

In order to meet these requirements, the company has developed a skilled service especially for listed, period and traditional homes. CosyHome developed CosyGlazing, a unique plexiglass secondary glazing system that is elegant, unobtrusive and efficient. Reversible and invisible from the outside, it is approved for listed buildings.

The team has developed specialist skills for fitting to old windows of all types, fixed or opening, including that wonderful British feature, the sliding sash window. Every home insulated reduces its energy costs and carbon footprint significantly, which is steadily making the community more financially and environmentally sustainable.



CASE STUDY: 8 GREENER ILFRACOMBE

/ www.greenerilfracombe.org.uk/



"Greener Ilfracombe promotes sustainable energy solutions, by offering independent advice on local renewable energy generation and energy saving measures." Tim Cox.

"It was a seriously neglected piece of land but we have made it into something we can be proud of. There are now six large allotment plots on the site, along with an irrigation system. Around twenty volunteers have worked very hard to make it the way it is today." Nettie Pearson.

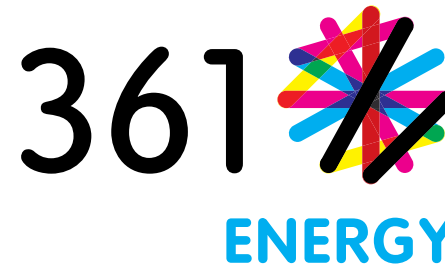
- **Project Team:** Various members of the community.
- **Number of People Engaged:** Estimated to be 200 plus.
- **Social Benefits:** The enhancement of the quality of life, pride, sense of wellbeing and health of residents and increase public knowledge.
- **Economic Benefits:** supporting new energy technologies and local businesses to reduce energy consumption, results in reduced heating costs.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Reducing emissions of greenhouse gasses and encouraging others to do the same.
- **Partner/Sponsors:** Organisations include Trans-send, Community Resources Devon, Ilfracombe in Bloom, Cairn Conservation Careers, Ilfracombe C of E Junior School, MyStart Children's Centre, Ilfracombe & District Community Alliance and Community Transport.



Greener Ilfracombe provide support to community-led projects within the Ilfracombe area. Each project has a project leader and steering group who are responsible for day-to-day actions, and come together for regular meetings and project sub-group meetings when needed.

Greener Ilfracombe is a non-profit network of community members who are working to reduce their carbon emissions through projects related to food, energy, sustainable transport, waste reduction and water consumption. Currently there are four main projects in operation:

361 Energy (and Transend) provide information and advice to commercial business, community enterprises and individuals about renewable energy, sustainable living and energy saving. They work with households and schools in Ilfracombe and beyond to help support them to reduce their gas and electricity consumption through behavioural changes and technical solutions.



Calf Green Allotments are over half an acre of previously unused green space, which has been transformed into organic vegetable plots. Community groups such as Ilfracombe Church of England Junior School, The Third Ilfracombe Brownies and the Sure-Start Children's Centre are responsible for digging, planting, cultivating and maintaining their individuals plots. A 'Green Service Station' – housing shared tools and equipment - enables the maintenance of the allotment garden, and ensures a strong communal element to the project.

Laston Green Community Allotments, now in its first year of production, is a community garden, which was established after over half an acre of overgrown and unused field was identified in the town.

Over the past two years numerous volunteers have contributed by planting fruit trees, a fruiting hedge and built terraces in which to grow vegetables.

Greener Ilfracombe organises the town's annual **Jack-in the-Green** May Day celebrations, during which a colorful procession winds it's way through the streets and children and morris dancers dance around the maypole.



Cow Green Community Eco-Garden is a wildlife garden and recreational space located in the heart of one of Ilfracombe's most deprived areas. The project, which was started ten years ago, grew out of the communities' desire to establish a 'green lung of Ilfracombe'. Subsequent development of a community garden by volunteers, local contractors and local authorities has resulted in a beautiful eco-garden, providing a space for local residents to enjoy.

BIDEFORD SUSTAINABILITY GROUP



- **Project Team:** Six voluntary Trustees and an additional ten regular volunteers.
- **Number of People Engaged:** Up to thirty per event.
- **Social Benefits:** To strengthen our community along sustainable lines.
- **Economic Benefits:** Provides opportunities to grow local food, aims to share skills amongst local people, promotes sustainable living.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Encouraging people to live more lightly on the planet, especially in terms of growing food and examining their energy use.



"It's great that people will be able to help themselves to fruit from the orchard in years to come – it makes it a true community orchard!"

"We would never have got our garden started without the help we've had from Bideford Sustainability Group."

Bideford Sustainability Group is a growing number of local people who are passionate about making Bideford a thriving and sustainable community.

Bideford Sustainability Group (BSG) was set up in 2010 and, using the Transition Town movement as a model, we harnessed the enthusiasm of our community to start a Food Group and a Skills Group. It is very much a part of our ethos to work in partnership with other groups and organisations in the belief that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The Food Group, with a passion for anything food related, has planted and maintains two small community orchards on the Tarka Trail with support from the North Devon's Biosphere. We share a joint dream of an orchard running the length of the Tarka Trail. The Food Group is working with Tarka Housing, Grow@Jigsaw and gardeners at Morwenna Park in Northam to build a beautiful and productive community garden at Morwenna Park.

The Skills Group believes that whoever we are we have skills which can be shared. Most people don't recognise that many of the things they do and take for granted are envied skills to somebody else. With this in mind, the Skills Group has put on workshops from making nest boxes for solitary bees, growing salads on your windowsill and vegetables in containers, making a water filter from re-used items to making new shopping bags from previously loved fabrics.

The Energy Group came into being in 2012 when there was a surge of interest in energy; how to stop wasting it, how to insulate your house better, micro-generation etc. **BSG** with a number of partners across North Devon's Biosphere area held a series of public consultation events with **BSG** hosting an Open Space event. Many at these events were experiencing a bewildering array of information about energy issues. **BSG's** energy group is developing a number of projects, again in conjunction with other local groups, to remove and de-mystify the barriers preventing our community from moving to a more sustainable lifestyle.



NORTH DEVON BIOSPHERE FOUNDATION



- **Project Team:** Four voluntary directors.
- **Number of People Engaged:** Between 5,000 to 7,000 across projects.
- **Social Benefits:** Engaging communities.
- **Economic Benefits:** Qualitative benefits to tourism / education / social engagement.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Funding environmental enhancement work.
- **Partner/Sponsors:** Dome and trailer funded by Leader 4 and the Foundation, Confluence funded by the Arts Council and Leader 4, Life's journey funded by Heritage Lottery Devon County Council and landfill tax credits through Devon Waste Management and Marsden's Holiday Cottages, Julie's Bicycle funded by a private donation.



"A fantastic day. The children were totally inspired by Sarah to write fabulous stories about the giants. They named them, described their characterisation and gave them personalities." Judith Sutton. Teacher at Great Torrington Junior School.

The Foundation is dedicated to furthering the aims of the UNESCO North Devon Biosphere Reserve Partnership by promoting innovative social, educational and cultural projects fostering links with communities and businesses.

The North Devon Biosphere Foundation is committed to the Biosphere's strategy and action plan and works closely with all partners in the Biosphere. The Foundation initiates projects that support the exploration and development of new practices, many of which involve multi-disciplinary approaches to sustainable development in both rural villages and the wider local business community.

The Biosphere Dome and Trailer project has created a bespoke exhibition trailer and inflatable dome for use for outdoor events by the Biosphere team, local community groups and schools. It is equipped to create a mobile classroom, meeting room or exhibition venue and can be customized to suit a range of different events.

As part of the Biosphere's Nature Improvement Area programme to improve habitats in the river Torridge, the Giants in the Forest project saw giant faces appearing in woodlands along the Tarka Trail overlooking the river. During a story telling day on the Trail, Great Torrington Junior School were the first to use the Biosphere Dome. Where they created stories about their journey to see the Giants in the Forest.

The Confluence project piloted the use of practical and digital arts to inform local communities about their impact on their local environment in the River Torridge catchment. This brought together the University of Plymouth's Institute of Digital Art and Technology (i-DAT), Appledore Arts, Beaford Arts, North Devon Biosphere Reserve and Petroc.

Life's Journey is an ongoing project that aims to increase physical and intellectual access to the built and cultural history of three sites in northern Devon that are linked by Tarka Trail cycle/pedestrian path. It explores what the heritage of those places tells us about local people's relationship with the environment over the past 200 years.

The foundation also invited Julie's Bicycle a broad coalition of music, theatre, visual arts and scientific experts to assess the environmental performance of the Biosphere Arts Community. The project is the first time that Julie's Bicycle had worked with a rural arts community.

The Foundation also promotes new partnerships with business. For example working with Marsden's Holiday Cottages over £2500 has been raised so far, this money was used to support the Life's Journey project. For each holiday booking they ask visitors to make a small £1 donation for environmental work in the Biosphere.



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The information provided in this book is designed to provide helpful information on the subjects discussed.

Readers should be aware that the websites and telephone numbers listed in this publication may change.



This publication is only intended to provide a snapshot of things going on in the

Biosphere in our tenth year. New initiatives and groups are emerging all of the time.

The North Devon Transition Forum now provides links between several groups and meets every month on a Thursday evening. North Devon Voluntary Services, The Community Council of Devon, the Parish and District Councils are also good sources of information about current activities in your community.

Other organisations working with local communities to promote sustainably include:

North Devon Voluntary Services

www.ndvs.org.uk

Telephone: 01271 866 300

North Devon Transition Forum

[www.twitter.com/NDTransition](https://twitter.com/NDTransition)

www.facebook.com/groups/112906138847765/

Community Council of Devon

www.devonrcc.org.uk

Telephone: 01392 248 919



If you would like to host your own event the North Devon Biosphere Foundation's inflatable dome email: info@ndbf.org.uk for details. The mobile trailer is available for hire to schools and community groups. Further information is also available via the **North Devon Biosphere Reserve Foundation** website at: www.northdevonbiospherefoundation.org.uk

NORTH DEVON'S BIOSPHERE RESERVE
ROOM 508 - THE CIVIC CENTRE
NORTH WALK - BARNSTAPLE
NORTH DEVON - EX31 1EA

Telephone: 01271 388 647
www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk

The case studies in this publication describe how community groups and enterprises are engaging in sustainable development across North Devon's Biosphere Reserve.

This publication celebrates the Biosphere's tenth year and highlights the work of both new and long established organizations. It shows how communities are organizing to learn about growing affordable food, how arts, training and social events can reconnect people to their environment, how eco tourism is taking shape and how community enterprises and innovative companies are taking up the energy saving challenge.

By making visible the commitment of people locally to promoting sustainable living and resilient futures we hope to encourage others to join them.

