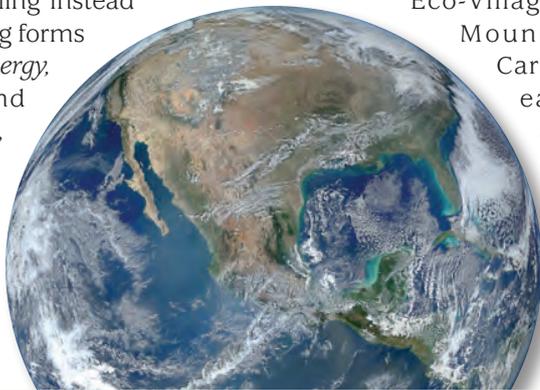


# The *rise* of the **ecovillage**



The planet is in big trouble as a result of climate change, brought about *mainly* by the increased levels of atmospheric *carbon dioxide* produced by the use of *fossil fuels*, and it's all because of how humans in modern society live – because of how much we drive, how much we *waste*, and how much plastic we use, for example. But there are places in the world known as ecovillages, where communities of people live with the goal of producing the *least* possible negative impact on the natural environment by doing things like cycling instead of driving; using forms of *renewable energy*, like wind and solar power, instead of fossil fuels; and avoiding the use of plastic as much as possible.



## History

Ecovillages *evolved* from the commune culture<sup>1</sup> of the 1960s and 70s, and the term ‘ecovillage’ was first used by an American professor named George Ramsey at the First World Energy Conference of the Association of Energy Engineers in 1978. The ecovillage movement, *advocating* the development of sustainable communities, continued to grow in the 1980s, culminating in the establishment of the first ecovillage in the US, the Earthaven Eco-Village in Black Mountain, North Carolina, in the early 1990s, and the formation of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) in 1995.

Today, the Earthaven Eco-Village consists of over 70 families, living *off the grid* on more than 350 acres<sup>2</sup> of land, and GEN has a global *network* of thousands of ecovillages in 70 countries on six continents.

<sup>1</sup>The commune culture refers to community living, big in the 60s and 70s with the counterculture and the hippie movement.

<sup>2</sup>Around 142 hectares



the rise  
mainly  
carbon dioxide  
fossil fuels

**l'essor  
principalement  
le dioxyde de carbone  
(CO2)  
les énergies fossiles**

to waste  
least  
renewable energy  
to evolve

**gaspiller, gâcher  
moins, le moindre  
l'énergie renouvelable  
(ici) naître de**

to advocate  
off the grid  
a network

**promouvoir, prôner  
quelque chose  
autosuffisant  
(en électricité surtout)  
un réseau**

## Findhorn Ecovillage

At the heart of the ecovillage movement is a village in Moray, Scotland, called Findhorn. Home to an intentional community since the early 1960s, it was at a conference here in 1995 that the founding members of GEN met and decided to form the network, by *linking* hundreds of small projects from around the world with similar *goals*. To the south of the village of Findhorn lies the UK's largest ecovillage, Findhorn Ecovillage, which is home to about 400 residents, who live in about 100 buildings made from environmentally friendly materials like *whisky barrels*, local stone and *straw bales*.

Known as 'The Park', the ecovillage runs *solely* on renewable energy, in the form of wind turbines and *solar panels*, and has an innovative *sewage*



A little home built with whisky barrels in Findhorn Ecovillage



A street in Findhorn ecovillage

“ Findhorn Ecovillage is home to about 400 residents, who live in about 100 buildings made from environmentally-friendly materials. ”

treatment plant called the Living Machine, which uses plants, *snails* and fish to purify *wastewater*, which is then recycled or released into the sea. Residents of the ecovillage *rely heavily* on food that they produce themselves, including the 65 types of vegetables that they grow in their gardens, and they also participate in a *car share system*. One study found that they have the lowest *ecological footprint* of any community in the industrialised world, at just over half of that of the *average* UK resident. ►



## Global Ecovillage Network

According to the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) website, [ecovillage.org](http://ecovillage.org), the network has five regional networks, as well as the youth arm, NextGEN, which together are made up of about 10,000 communities and related projects, “where people are living together in greater ecological harmony”. The network, it says, “envisions a world of *empowered citizens* and communities, designing and *implementing pathways* to a *regenerative* future, while building bridges of hope and international solidarity”.

<i>an empowered citizen</i>	<b>un citoyen indépendant, autonome</b>
<i>to implement a pathway</i>	<b>mettre en œuvre un chemin, une voie</b>
<i>regenerative</i>	<b>renouvelable</b>

<i>to link</i>	<b>relier</b>
<i>a goal</i>	<b>un objectif</b>
<i>a whisky barrel</i>	<b>un tonneau de whisky</b>
<i>straw bales</i>	<b>des bottes de paille</b>
<i>solely</i>	<b>uniquement</b>

<i>a solar panel</i>	<b>un panneau solaire</b>
<i>sewage/ wastewater</i>	<b>les eaux usées</b>
<i>a snail</i>	<b>un escargot</b>
<i>to rely heavily on</i>	<b>dépendre fortement de</b>

<i>a car share system</i>	<b>un système de partage de véhicule</b>
<i>an ecological footprint</i>	<b>l'empreinte écologique</b>
<i>average</i>	<b>normal, moyen</b>



► **A less lonely place**

Although ecovillages have been growing in popularity for *decades*, perhaps the greatest *surge* in interest has come about as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, due to the loneliness and isolation experienced by many due to repeated *lockdowns*



Forgebank Lancaster-Co-Housing

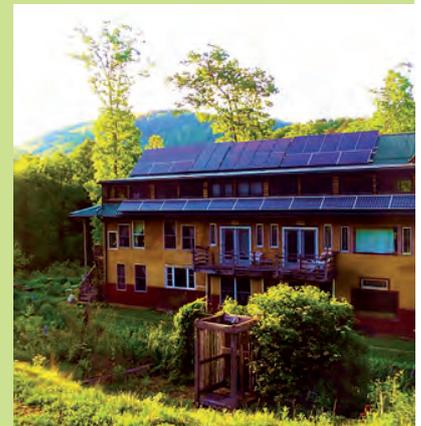
## Definition of an ecovillage

GEN defines an ‘ecovillage’ as “an intentional, traditional or urban community that is consciously designing its pathway through locally owned, *participatory processes*, and aiming to address the ecovillage principles in the four areas of regeneration (social, culture, ecology, economy) into a whole systems design... Because each ecovillage is designed by the people who live there, according to their vision, context, culture and interests, no two are alike.

“While every ecovillage is unique, GEN categorizes them into two general categories, which can be found in either rural or urban settings:

- ✓ traditional – existing rural villages and communities that decide to design their own pathway into the future, using participatory processes to combine life-sustaining traditional *wisdom* and positive new innovation
- ✓ intentional – created by people who come together *afresh* with a shared *purpose* or vision”

<i>a participatory process</i>	<b>un processus participatif</b>
<i>wisdom</i>	<b>le savoir, la sagesse</b>
<i>afresh</i>	<b>à zéro</b>
<i>a purpose</i>	<b>un but</b>



and *mandatory* quarantine. A study by the British Red Cross round that two in five adults reported feeling lonely during the first lockdown in the UK last year, and more recent figures, by the Office for National Statistics, found that 8% of British adults, representing a *staggering*

4.2 million people, reported feeling “always or often lonely” during this same period.

Alison Cahn, 63, is a resident of another British ecovillage, or eco co-housing development, as it describes itself, called Forgebank, in Lancaster, England, which is home to about 65 adults and 15 children. She explained to the British newspaper METRO why ecovillages were a safe and *comforting* place to be for many people during the Covid-19 *pandemic*, and how her community *set up* a five-person response team *to check up on* residents, including older people in quarantine. “We’ve had a couple of people contacting everyone in *single-person households* to check how they are doing, see if they need anything and ask if they want to be

<i>lonely</i>	<b>seul, isolé</b>
<i>a decade</i>	<b>une décennie</b>
<i>a surge</i>	<b>une montée</b>
<i>a lockdown</i>	<b>un confinement</b>

<i>mandatory</i>	<b>obligatoire</b>
<i>staggering</i>	<b>impressionnant</b>
<i>comforting</i>	<b>réconfortant, rassurant</b>
<i>a pandemic</i>	<b>une pandémie</b>

<i>to set up</i>	<b>mettre en place</b>
<i>to check up on</i>	<b>prendre des nouvelles</b>
<i>a single-person household</i>	<b>un foyer constitué d’une seule personne</b>

“ Loneliness is always much more pronounced when you’re bored or you don’t have anything to do... ”

**Fred Cooper, historian**

assigned a *buddy*, and if someone has a *spare set of their keys*. Some people say, ‘I’m fine, leave me alone,’ other people really want to talk. So it’s just keeping an eye on how people are doing,” she said.

Historian Fred Cooper, who has studied loneliness in society in recent times, agrees that co-housing offers a solution to feelings of loneliness and isolation, and said that he “wouldn’t be at all surprised” if the



Covid-19 pandemic *leads to* an increased number of people taking up residence in ecovillages and other such communities. “Loneliness is always much more pronounced

when you’re *bored* or you don’t have anything to do... Covid has made people think a lot more about loneliness, and hit home just how difficult it can be to live alone,” he said. ■

## How to live *sustainably*

Not everyone has *the means* or freedom to pack up their lives and go live in an ecovillage, but that doesn’t mean we can’t all find ways to live more sustainably. Here are eight things you can do to try to reduce your carbon footprint:

- ✓ Minimise your use of single-use plastics like plastic straws and plastic bags.
- ✓ Stop buying *disposable* plastic water bottles and buy a *reusable* water bottle instead.
- ✓ Avoid food waste by planning meals, saving *leftovers* and learning how *to store* food properly.
- ✓ Buy local and organic food, because it has the lowest carbon footprint.
- ✓ Start an eco-friendly garden and grow your own fruits and vegetables.
- ✓ Recycle properly by separating your *household waste* and educating yourself about what can and can’t be recycled.
- ✓ Stop buying fast fashion and invest in high-quality *clothing* made from sustainable and recycled materials.
- ✓ Reduce your energy use by being *mindful* about your use and having an *energy-efficient home*.
- ✓ Reduce your water use by doing things like using barrels to collect *rainwater* for use in your garden.
- ✓ Walk or cycle whenever possible, and use *public transportation instead of driving*.

*sustainably* **durablement**  
*the means* **les moyens**  
*disposable* **jetable**  
*reusable* **réutilisable**  
*to avoid* **éviter**  
*leftovers* **les restes**  
*to store* **garder, conserver**  
*household waste* **les ordures ménagères**

*clothing* **les vêtements**  
*mindful* **conscient, soucieux**  
*energy-efficient home* **une maison à faible consommation d’énergie**  
*rainwater* **l’eau de pluie**  
*public transportation instead of* **les transports en commun au lieu de**



*a buddy* **un copain, un compagnon**  
*a spare set of keys* **un double de clés**

*to lead to* **entraîner quelque chose**  
*to be bored* **s’ennuyer**