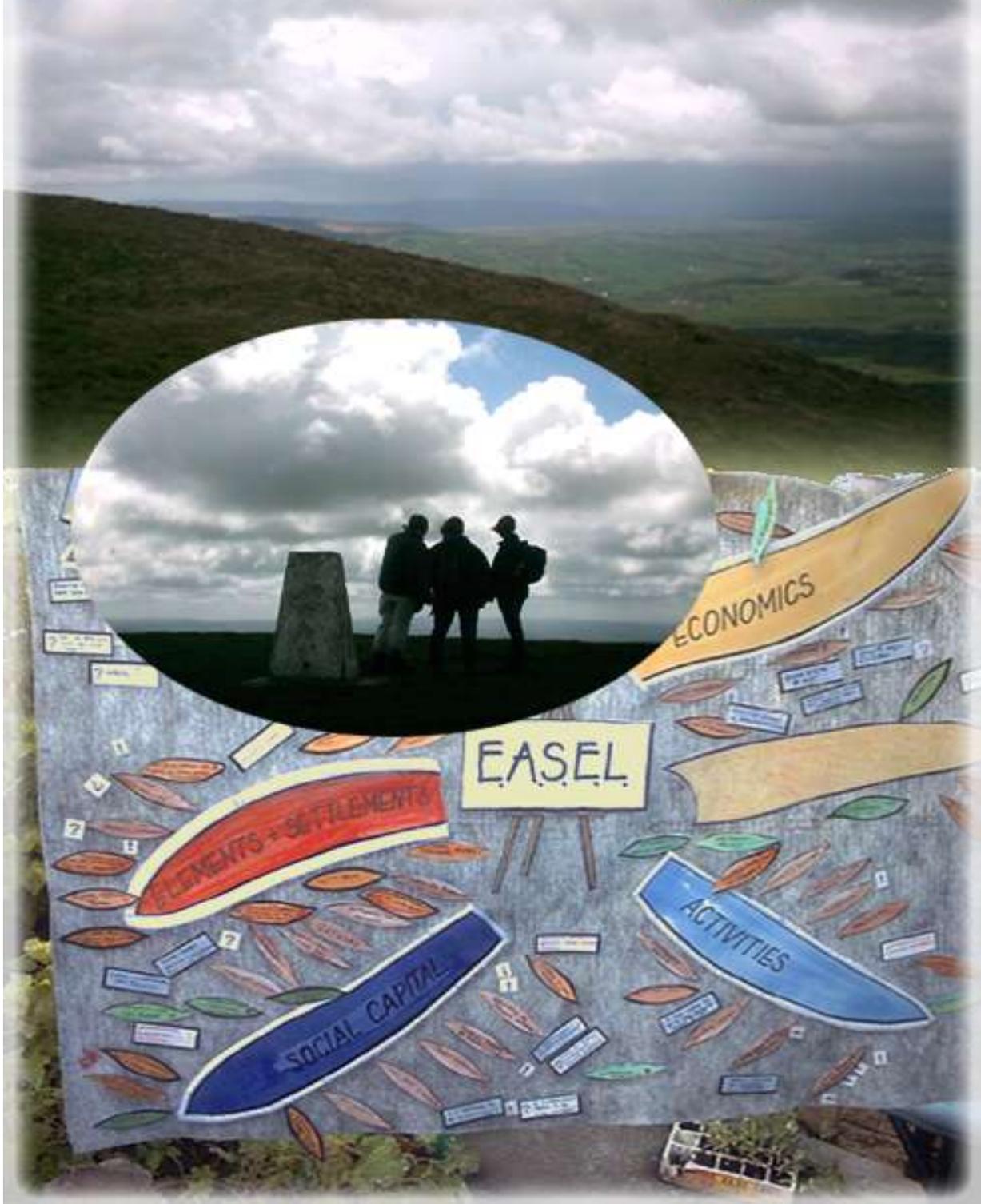


# Permaculture

## in the North West of England



# **Permaculture in the North West of England**

## **The Future of the Permaculture Association (Britain)**

### **MEMBERS' CONSULTATION REPORT 2005**

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## Introduction

***This report summarises the outcomes of the regional consultation event held at Barley Village Hall in East Lancashire on the 7 May 2005. The event was held to enable members of the Permaculture Association (Britain) to look at the future of the PAB and contribute to the national consultation initiated at the 2004 AGM.***

***This summary, capturing the participants' input, has been compiled by the facilitators. These notes do not necessarily represent either the individual views of the authors or individual participants in the workshop. If there are any major errors, please inform Angus Soutar ([rsl@letsgo.u-net.com](mailto:rsl@letsgo.u-net.com)) or Steven Beesley ([StevenB@communityfutures.org.uk](mailto:StevenB@communityfutures.org.uk))***



## **2. Aims**

*The overall aims of the workshop were to:*

1. develop a vision of the future of Permaculture in Britain;
2. develop the role (goals, aims and objectives) of the PA (B) in delivering that vision;
3. explore the issues around this role, the functions and the structures that could be adopted;
4. provide input to inform future consultations about the PA(B);
5. provide an opportunity for delegates to learn from each other.

## **3. Participants**

A total of 17 members attended, mostly resident in the North West of England. We were pleased to welcome a few people from neighbouring regions. Participants included permaculture designers, teachers, permaculture project leaders, organisers, activists and current course students. They came from a wide variety of backgrounds with many deeply involved in community-based projects. There was a strong bias towards urban and peri-urban projects, with several present having raised significant funding for their projects and for others. The great majority of those attending held permaculture Design Course certificates.

## **4. Design, Facilitation and Report**

The event was designed and planned by Joanne Tippett, Steven Beesley and Angus Soutar. The event was staged with assistance from Joanne Redstone, Fraser How, Krysia Soutar, Judy Yacoub and Louise Morgan.

The day was facilitated by Angus Soutar, assisted by Ann Kolodziejki. Group facilitation was provided by Ann K, Joanne Tippett and Steven Beesely, supported by Fraser How and Judy Yacoub.

After the session, data recording was carried out by Fraser How and Krysia Soutar and this report was produced by Angus Soutar and Rob Squires. (Thanks to Chris Chidlow for some of the photographs - and for use of his tow rope.)

## 5. Workshop outline

*The event used the DesignWays consultation process, under a special license from Holocene Design. The agenda for the day was as follows:*

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>9.30</b>	<b>Sign in</b>
<b>10.00</b>	<b>Opening circle and Introduction to the session</b>
<b>10.40</b>	<b>What do I value in the PA(B) at the moment?</b>
<b>11.00</b>	<b>COFFEE BREAK</b>
<b>11.15</b>	<b>Review the work so far What are our top five out of all these?</b>
<b>11.45</b>	<b>Feedback Short break – stand up and stretch</b>
<b>12.15</b>	<b>Permaculture in Britain – how will we know it's successful in 10 -20 years from now?</b>
<b>12.45</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>
<b>13.30</b>	<b>What will be the role of the PA(B) in achieving this success?</b>
<b>14.00</b>	<b>Goals for the PA(B)</b>
<b>14.15</b>	<b>Feedback</b>
<b>15.00</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>15.15</b>	<b>Discussing the issues</b>
<b>15.45</b>	<b>Feedback, summary</b>
<b>16.00</b>	<b>Finish</b>

## **6. Workshop activities and outcomes**

The following sections describe the workshop activities and include summaries of the key outcomes of the workshop. All of the ideas developed by participants during the workshop were entered into a database, which is available as a separate file, that can be downloaded from (check with [rsl@letsgo.u-net.com](mailto:rsl@letsgo.u-net.com)). This database of outcomes was used to develop the summaries here. Participants developed priorities and summaries on the day that are shown in photo reports, also available as separate files.

### **6.1 Opening Circle**

Angus Soutar gave a brief introduction and welcome and introduced Joanne Tippett of Holocene Design, provider of the toolkit that we used during the day. Angus then provided an overview of the day's activities.

### **6.2 What do we value in the PA(B) at the moment?**

In this first session, participants split into three groups of around six people per group. Each group was asked to identify existing assets, or aspects of the current picture that are working well. Each idea was written on colour-coded “leaves” (in this case, brown, to indicate a rich and fertile “compost”) using erasable markers.

The leaves were then clustered around large “branches”, pre-prepared on the tabletop, and labeled with different categories to prompt thinking and encourage participants to organise the information. Additional branches were provided so that participants could label them with themes that arose during discussion. Using this method, the participants synthesised their ideas into a coherent map. The results were later entered into the database that is now available as a detailed record.

Participants were asked to visit the other groups' work, indicate areas where there are questions to ask and identify what is considered as a priority. Following this exercise, each group was asked to identify the five most important existing assets and to comment on why they worked well. These ideas were then fed back in plenary session, where they were captured on flip charts (see photo report for those results).

<b>Key Existing Assets (priorities)</b>	
<b>Economics</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Volunteers	
Sharing resources	
Charity receives ££	
Cheap membership!	
Ability to receive donations	
Voluntary effort	
<b>Activities</b>	
Link students to teachers	
Resources – articles etc	
International representation	Of whom?
Website	
Database on projects	Being done now?
A focal point for info	
A good resource for info about permaculture	?
Course info	
<b>Social Capital</b>	
Space to support/ find support	Co-ordinating and supporting projects
Public profile for permaculture	
Knowledge	?
Connecting people	Linking members and linking activities
Registry of diploma holders	
Support of diploma	
Convergences	
<b>Elements and settlements</b>	
Network of projects (demonstration)	?
Office resource	?
Office	
Exemplars	Demonstration
<b>Landscapes</b>	
Human and geographic landscapes - locating and celebrating exemplars	
Land-based projects supported	
Bequest land	Does the PAB own land? How much? Where?

The table shows the priorities established. The plenary session also brought out the view that the ideas and ethics of permaculture are an asset,. However, they have a greater value to us when they are communicated. There was also expression of the idea that the PA(B) was “here in the room” - we are all working for permaculture and are all responsible for building up the assets.

### 6.3 Permaculture in Britain – How will we know if it is successful in 10-20 years?

Groups worked at their tables with the maps developed so far, adding yellow “leaves” with their ideas for “measures of success”. These ideas indicate general goals for permaculture in Britain in the medium term. Additional white boxes were available to record comments and questions.

These ideas were revisited and prioritised as the session progressed, giving the following results:

<b>Measures of success in 10-20 years (priorities)</b>	
<b>Economics</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Financially healthy	Well established and politically commercially established LETS schemes
Active consultee with L.A. planning and property services departments	Domestic renewable energy systems being used in large scale housing market renewal programmes as a result of community consultation.
Economies will be self sustaining	
LETS' systems majority of neighbourhoods	
More regional local food production	
Credit Unions in most regions	
Corporations replaced by social enterprise	
Low carbon economy	
Population much greener	
Ever increasing local production	
<b>Activities</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Well developed local organic produce markets	
Permaculture in schools	
<b>Social Capital</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Lots of support locally, not just nationally	
Support for groups/individuals	Active groups
Larger membership, more recognised expert leaders	
Regional offices/contacts	
It (Permaculture) won't exist	(It will be normal)
We will still be alive	
Ongoing critical debate about process and outcomes	
Increased capacity to calibrate success	

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<b>Elements and settlements</b>	<b>Comments</b>
City Farms	
More urban space used for growing food and appropriate landscapes	
Energy efficient homes	
Transport systems will be integrated and overall travel reduced	
Demonstration sites	
Recognised toolkit for designers	Design manual?
Green infrastructure	
Functional, non-oil-based energy	
<b>Landscape</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Zoning concepts are understood and implemented by planners, developers and policymakers	
British people no longer contribute to world-wide ecological damage	
Integrated landscape designs become the norm	
Recognisable landscape projects identifiable with Permaculture	
Clean rivers clean fish	
No pollution	
Net reduction in UK ecological footprint	
<b>Other</b>	<b>Comments</b>
"Work" will no longer be a burden	
Permaculture recognised as high standard for Sust. Development	
Practiced permaculturalist as prime minister	
More people aware of permaculture	
Clarity – is it a product or a process?	
Knowing what permaculture means - having clarity around the core principles	
Well-designed permaculture organisation	

## 6.4 How can the PA(B) contribute to this?

The focus then changed to asking “what must be done to to achieve those measures of success?” The groups were encouraged to brainstorm, responding to each measure of success (yellow leaf) with an idea recorded on a green leaf. Each group clustered the leaves. Exclamation marks were added to the green leaves to indicate which ones were considered the most important. These priority items are shown in the table here.

<b>What can the PA(B) contribute to this? (priorities)</b>	
<b>Economics</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Promote use of zoning to define development on domestic and larger scale	Biofuel refining plants in every county/town
Fund raising	
Income Generation	
Infrastructure design	
<b>Activities</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Showcase prmaculture at major/mainstream events e.g. cnferences, seminars	
Disseminate ideas effectively	
Communicate policy and policy ideas to local government	
Publicise demonstration projects via (online) directoryand advertise national open days	
Be a cuckoo - get regular slots in other's publications	
Connect with PCT's for a "5-a-day" and prescription gardening etc	
Permaculture principles/ethics workshops for all local councillors and officers	
Regular workshops and permaculture demonstrations in libraries	
Use media effectively (mainstream)	
Educational workshops on urban forestry and sustainable transport in Highways Dept's	
Linking/ training for health workers / other children's agencies	

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<b>Social Capital</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Redesign PAB	Ongoing priority
Checklist for permaculture standard	
Permaculture community networking	
Networking with like-minded peopl	
Facilitate regional WorkNet development	
Facilitate design of permaculture community	
Academy page on web site	
Communicate about the possibilities of the web site for members - make clearer on the web	
Support people doing good things - make it easier for people	
Resources network	
Make links with other groups/organizations	
Permaculture as a cross-cultural development tool	
<b>Elements and Settlements</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Supporting/ co-ordinating projects	
<b>Other</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Accredit lead teachers	
Open tansparent structure and decision-making process	
"Rolling" design and development	

## 6.5 What are the top five goals for the Permaculture Association?

With the full map produced so far still in front of them, goals for the PA(B) were recorded on yellow leaves. Each group visited the other tables, marking priority items and leaving comments. Grey boxes provided the opportunity to note problems and limits. These limits were then used to prompt creative discussion about overcoming the problems.

Finally, each group wrote their top five priority goals on A4 sheets ready for a plenary discussion. The discussion that followed involved more sharing and clarification than controversy. These priorities represent an important output of the day and may be viewed as draft recommendations, worthy of wider discussion. A photo report of the priority goal A4 sheets is available, but for convenience they have been re-typed here:

- Facilitate the design of permaculture in Britain e.g. regional clusters, social enterprises
- Maintain a conscious, iterative, process of permaculture design of the Association
- Facilitate a debate amongst the members about the core understanding of permaculture
  - – e.g. Is it a **product**
  - or is it a **process?**
- uncover areas of consensus and divergence
- Clarify and promote the role of the Diploma and the role of the three-way partnership between the Association the Academy and the WorkNet
- Organisation sustainability
  - Income generation (training, seminars)
  - Fundraising
  - Develop asset base (office ownership)
  - Regionalisation (receive “dues”)
  - Localisation (receive “dues”)
  - Membership (keep current, get new)
  - Governance (correct structure for activity)
- Networking
  - to enable permaculture community support
  - permaculture community
  - likeminded people and organisations
  - influencing national policy
  - publicity, media, marketing
- Develop standards
  - demonstration sites
  - teachers
  - accreditation of courses
  - organistaions shown to be demonstrating permaculture values and ethics

- Demonstration sites
  - model
  - education
  - research
  - best practice and standards
- Support members
  - supporting projects (through showcasing, awards/recognition)
  - kitemarking/quality standards
  - resource networks (funding for projects, media support, consultancy services)
- Improved communications
  - online networks and resources
  - use of mainstream media
  - outreach development
  - targeting decision-makers
  - disseminating good practice
- Policy development
  - influence policy at local, regional, national and international level, taking permaculture to the heart of policy and practice in sustainable development and civil renewal
  - develop internal policy
- Marketing
  - carry out design of consultancy services (e.g. community consultation)
  - carry out research
  - kitemarking/awards
  - open days for demonstration sites as a national programmes
- Educational
  - mainstream
  - make more accessible
  - influencing already accredited curricula e.g. National curriculum
  - bring human thinking and nature together
  - establish reliable qualifications
  - outreach ! (support outreach workers)
- Education
  - Develop “mainstream” teaching modules
  - Commission research
  - Policy makers, funders
  - Awareness raising and Promotion
  - Oversee teacher accreditation (who?)

*The priority problems and limits that came out in the process are listed here:*

<b>Problems and limits</b>	
<b>Economics</b>	
Does it give ££ out?	
But how is it spent. ??? Decision making?	
<b>Social Capital</b>	
Perhaps cheaper regional convergences (making it small scale)	
Is it enough to be sustainable?	Is sustainability really to do with numbers?

## 6.6 Exploring the issues for the PA(B)

The final session of the day was a general discussion on how the PA(B) would go about achieving the goals we had just outlined, what form would it take etc. This discussion took place in new groups, with a plenary report-back (see photo-report). Again, the key discussion points are reproduced here, for convenience and as a summary:

Full consensus was achieved on one recommendation:

- *That this process continue with our input to a national membership consultation, that a national consultation event be called, with at least three months notice, along with advance information of the rationale (why we are doing it) and a fully developed, published, range of options to discuss.*

We also recorded a noticeable tension within the PA(B) – not only including members and projects, but also maintaining certain standards etc

Other comments:

- Just beginning to scratch the surface here!
- Function: confusion here, amongst whole membership; positive aspects related to supporting members; there are issues to deal with around promoting permaculture
- Organisation: the PA(B) has charitable aims, members do projects – need a balance between the two strands
- Legal form: we like the charity; yes, we like enterprise model, but should be a separate organisation
- Strategy: relationship between projects and PA(B), what is a “project”? Ways of generating income?
- Need to keep members informed

Some further elaboration, in rough notes, can be seen in the photo report of proceedings, at the end.

Comments
<b>Activities</b>
It will be part of all education
It will have found ways to bring human/thinking and nature together - really taken this on board
Permaculture education recognised in mainstream schools and colleges
Permaculture design certificate and diploma are accredited and recognised as valuable across a range of disciplines
Permaculture familiar to everyone - dictionaries include it
It will be commonly understood much more widely
Permaculture is recognised as a key influence in changing public behaviour to achieve sustainable development targets
Education PAB

## 6.7 Summary of issues raised and next steps

- We had one clear consensus recommendation: That this process continue with our report to a national membership consultation, that a national consultation event be called, with at least three months notice, along with advance information of the rationale (why we are doing it) and a fully developed, published, range of options to discuss.
- Sessions 6.5 and 6.6 summarise the main outcomes of the day.
- All of the ideas that were written down by participants during the workshop were collated into a database (compatible with Microsoft Excel) that can be interrogated in different ways. Flip charts from the plenary discussions were photographed and are available as a pdf file.
- Together with this report, these documents can be used as a starting point for further workshops. All the information forms a complete record of the day and will be available for the PA(B) national consultation.
- The next step is to circulate the records to participants and stimulate further discussion of the issues raised.

