

## **LAMMAS LOW IMPACT SETTLEMENT PROJECT**

Draft Proposal  
3rd Edition  
August 2006



Pont y Gafel farm, Glandwr

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## **Introduction**

The Lammas group was formed on August 1st 2005 in Pembrokeshire to promote low impact development as one solution to the challenge of creating a more sustainable society.

Presented here is the 3rd edition of the Lammas proposal. It is directly concerned with the possible siting of the project at Pont y Gafel farm, Glandwr, Pembrokeshire. It has been compiled in response to feedback from members, local people and professionals.

We would like to emphasise that this proposal is still in its draft form and this edition represents the latest stage in the design process.

## **Vision**

Lammas aims to demonstrate the viability of low impact development as a settlement model that has the potential to rejuvenate the Welsh rural landscape and economy. We believe that the time has come for a thorough study of the contributions and implications of low impact development for the local and wider community. Thus we propose an exemplary project that will act as a milestone and a reference point for sustainable development possibilities.

The concept is that of a new build permaculture development of 25 smallholdings. The dwellings will merge with the natural environment that surrounds them. They will be highly innovative and earthy, using the latest environmental technologies combined with local natural materials. The dwellings will be unique, having been essentially created by the people living in them. Indeed, we expect that the site will become a successful demonstration of low-impact building and living. Each household will have exclusive access to at least 4 acres of land to enable the occupants, at the very least, to substantially meet their household needs through land based productivity. There will also be a common grazing area and a substantial area of wilderness.

The settlement will, by the nature of its layout and legal structures, encourage a more sustainable approach to living. It will have strong connections with the local and wider community and yet maintain a strong sense of its own unique identity. The settlement will be a net producer of land based products.

The settlement will be structured to reflect as close as possible a conventional village model, whilst allowing for a governing body that will ensure the low impact objectives of the project can be guaranteed in the long term.

## **Low Impact Development**

"A low impact development is one that, through its low negative environmental impact, either enhances or does not significantly diminish environmental quality."

*Simon Fairlie*

To live a low impact lifestyle is to establish a balance between resource consumption and production. In essence, this means to intelligently and intensively manage our surrounding environment in order to maximise return (in the forms of energy, water, food, shelter and products) and minimise waste (through recycling, composting and energy efficient systems). In practice, this means to adopt a land based, simple, localised lifestyle that works with the land and natural cycles available to us. In order to explore low impact living, it is necessary to create an integrated system of dwellings and infrastructure able to support such a venture.

## **Lammas**

The Lammas group is a means to an end. We are an unincorporated association committed to establishing a low impact settlement in Pembrokeshire. Lammas is currently managed by a committed core group numbering four people, and is a constituted organisation with a chair, secretary and treasurer selected from the core group. We currently have a membership of 85 households. The possibility of living in the settlement will be open only to members of Lammas. Details of how to become a member are available on our website. The organisation will publish accounts and will keep its members well informed, by e-mail or post, of developments in the project. It will invite feedback and initiatives from members. Lammas will keep a mailing list of supporters and interested people who will be updated of developments by e-mail.

Having established a low impact settlement, Lammas will pass on the ownership and management of the settlement to a Community Interest Company (CIC). Lammas will continue to research and promote low impact development.

At present the Lammas core group are:

Mr Tony Wrench, Chair  
Mr Paul Wimbush, Treasurer  
Dr Larch Maxey, Secretary  
Mr Chris Andrews, Website Coordinator

And are actively supported by:

Mr Gordon Jukes, Membership Coordinator  
Dr Jenny Pickerill, Independent Research Coordinator  
Mr Mark Dyson, Legal Advisor

## **Outline Plan**

The project will take place in two stages. The first stage involves establishing 12 smallholdings on the site. Once these have been established and can be demonstrated to be viable (5 years) a second stage of an additional 13 smallholdings will be introduced.

The project will be taken forward and managed by a Community Interest Company. This is a new kind of Company set up to pursue community based aims. Like any other Company CIC's have Directors who are legally accountable to the shareholders and to Companies House for the management of the Company. As shareholders in the Company residents will have an interest in the Company which will own the land.

## **Planning**

The new low impact policy created by Pembrokeshire County Council (Policy 50, JUDP) will create a whole new category for low impact development requiring that the settlement

- makes an active and measurable contribution to the local community,
- satisfies certain ecological criteria,
- and justifies itself through land based sustainable livelihoods.

We are optimistic that Lammas will attain outline planning permission for the development. An essential ingredient in the formation of the policy was the stated intention that low impact settlement proposers should work closely with the planning authority from the very first stages. We have already had a meeting with them concerning the content of the supplementary planning guidance on low impact development that has now been adopted (July 13<sup>th</sup> 2006). During the autumn of 2006, Lammas will engage Pembrokeshire County Council's Planning Department with the project's development.

As a pioneering project that will no doubt be of great public interest and could serve as a blueprint for similar future developments, Lammas will be sure to consult fully with planners over the kinds of parameters within which permission might be given for this project on the selected site to ensure a successful outcome for all parties.

## **The CIC**

Lammas is continuing to research legal structures for the project. At present the most viable option appears to be a cooperative Community Interest Company (CIC). The role of the CIC is to manage the land in such a way that it encourages a healthy community while at the same time promoting the project's objectives. The CIC will be directed and run by a small voluntary management committee. The management committee will be democratically elected on a five-year basis

The CIC will lease the plots to residents on a 20 year basis. The leases can be renewed at any time. The renewal of the leases will be conditional. Example conditions include:

1. That the dwelling be in full time occupancy.
2. That all development be approved by the CIC's low impact evaluation.
3. That, should the lease be sold, it must be sold to someone who is currently living in the region (SW Wales) and who themselves has had their own sustainable livelihood plan approved.
  
4. That the plot boundaries be kept in good order.
5. That the requirements of the Planning Permission are kept to.

The lease agreement will outline the projects objectives and request residents' assistance in the following areas:

- Cooperation on research objectives, i.e. keeping careful accounts of the economic and resource exchanges for each household.
- Guidance on water consumption and pollution.
- An open attitude towards visitors and interested parties.

Legally, the land and buildings will belong to the CIC. However, because the leases are tied to the individual plots, their relative value will be a reflection of the building's value. The CIC's management committee will oversee the planning consent process. They will also deal with other matters arising within the settlement that are concerned with the land and will have legal responsibility for ensuring that the terms of the planning permission are kept to.

## **Residents**

Here follows a list of requirements that anyone interested in becoming a resident should consider carefully:

- All development will need to be of a low impact nature. Residents will need to apply for planning consent from both the CIC and Pembrokeshire Planning Authority regarding any building development.
- Residents will need to submit a Sustainable Livelihood Plan to the CIC and Pembrokeshire Planning Authority for approval.
- Residents will be required to submit an Annual Monitoring Report to the CIC and Pembrokeshire Planning Authority demonstrating that they are substantially meeting their household needs from land based activity. The basis of this report will be an evaluation of the household's needs (in financial terms) and an evaluation of land based productivity (again, in financial terms).
- Residents will need to be aware that there will be restrictions on vehicle ownership within the settlement.

## **Selection Process**

It is proposed that potential residents will apply for the opportunity to buy a lease in the intended settlement. This may be as a premium for the leasehold for a 20-year lease, or may be in the form of shares in the company.

They will need to submit an "Outline Sustainable Livelihood Plan" to an independent selection panel.

The "Outline Sustainable Livelihood Plan" will consist of an outline of a resident's intentions for the project.

The independent panel will be made up of leading low impact and permaculture practitioners who are not involved in the Lammas project.

A fee will be charged. This will cover the panel's expenses and contribute to the cost of Lammas applying for outline planning permission.

The proposed criteria for the evaluation of designs will be divided into 8 sections:-

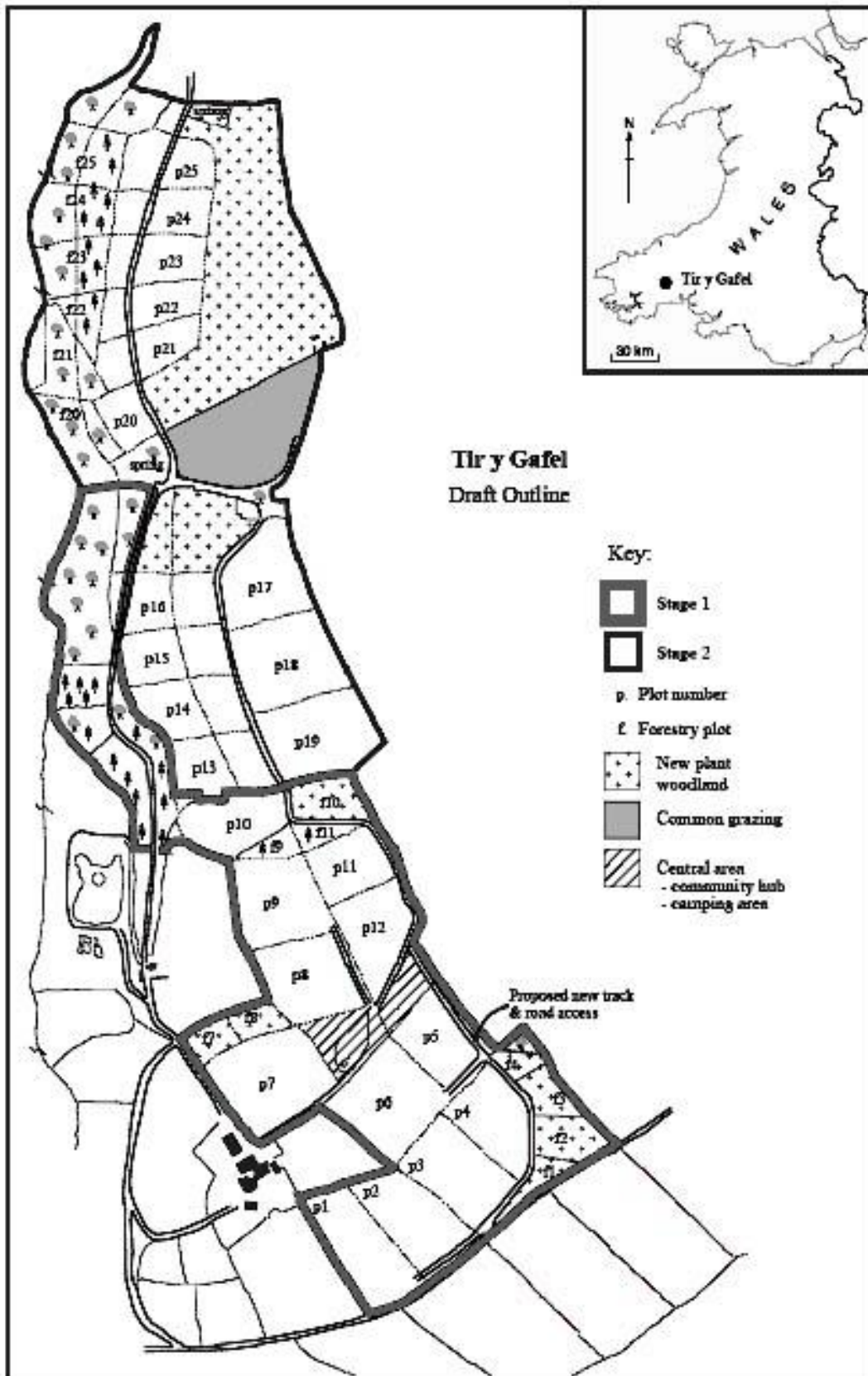
1. The building's nature and performance.
2. The viability of the applicants' livelihood plans.
3. The applicant's experience of low impact living, self build and land based productivity.
4. The sustainable nature of the applicant's alternative sources of work/income, with an emphasis on locality.
5. The ingenuity and creativity of the application.
6. The resident's relationship to the Welsh language.
7. The low impact nature of the design's solution to the challenge of temporary accommodation while house building takes place.
8. How locally the applicant lives at present.

Sections 1 and 2 of the outline sustainable livelihood plan will in essence be a simplified version of what will be required from the residents at a detailed planning application stage.

## **Land**

Lammas is currently considering a 175 acre plot of land next to the village of Glandwr in Pembrokeshire. The land is currently part of a farm called Pont y Gafel. The first stage will involve purchasing 76 acres of pasture and forestry. The agricultural land (on which the smallholdings will be sited) is well draining and south facing. It includes a millpond and some existing trackways.

The farm currently has a leat (water network) system and hydro - turbine in place. We have agreed, with the owner, in principle to a shared ownership of the leat system and the hydro – turbine. The farm currently has a spring which is used to supply bottled water. We have also agreed to an arrangement whereby the settlement will have access to the spring water during the night. Rainwater will be harvested for irrigation. Surplus irrigation water will be sourced from the leat.





At present we are proposing an independent access from the Glandwr - Llanfrynach road.

Along with the 12 smallholdings we are proposing a community hub building and a small camping area. The community hub building will accommodate a Company Office and a meeting space. It will be a small, low impact building of architectural merit. The camping area (which will include a compost toilet and washroom) will be provided to enable educational and working visitors to stay. It will accommodate up to eight tents. It will be sited next to the millpond in an area that is not overlooked.

The community shop will be integrated into the existing Glandwr Post Office. Initial talks with the owners of this enterprise have proved very promising.

### **Finance**

Our financial plan has been adapted to accommodate the current opportunity at Pont y Gafel. This consists of purchasing the land after attaining outline planning consent, thereby eliminating the need to raise a large amount of capital up front.

In this scenario, the residents will be selected in December 2006, before Lammas applies for outline planning consent in January 2007. Having attained planning consent, the residents will purchase their leases, empowering Lammas to purchase the land and initiate the development of the site's infrastructure.

All of the smallholding leases will be affordable, their price being a direct reflection of the cost of the land and the infrastructure costs. At present we are aiming for a lease price of up to £25,000. We are currently engaged in gathering estimates for developing the site's infrastructure. Once we have these in place we will be able to give a more detailed estimate of the lease price.

The Lammas committee recognises the importance of members being able to raise the necessary finance to establish themselves within the development. Financial Institutions will not usually give mortgages on a 20 year lease. We are currently researching a number of other possibilities.

One of these possibilities is the involvement of the Ecology Building Society, with which we have initiated a dialogue.

### **Exit Strategy**

In the unlikely situation of the project terminating, the CIC will have a clearly defined exit strategy in place. This will be agreed with Pembrokeshire Planning Authority. It will involve the site being cleared of any non biodegradable structures or materials, and the site being returned to a satisfactory condition, the details of which will be specified in the planning application.

A Company is an accountable legal entity. For a Company to become a CIC it has to be approved by the Government appointed Regulator and is then subject to a continuing monitoring and enforcement code. The Companies directors are legally responsible for carrying out the companies objectives.

In the unlikely event of the project not being able to fulfil its planning conditions or failing or ceasing to be viable the Community Interest Company would transfer it's assets including the site in accordance with the requirements of the Companies (Audit Investigation and Community Enterprise ) Act 2004 under the guidance of the Regulator.

### **Key Objectives of the Project**

1. All development will have a small ecological impact.
2. The natural wealth and biodiversity of the land will be enhanced.
3. The settlement will become integrated into the local community and will be an asset to the local economy.
4. The project will offer the opportunity of affordable housing for local people.
5. There will be an effective traffic reducing strategy in place.
6. The settlement will welcome visitors and have a clearly defined visitor policy.
7. The project will support land based sustainable livelihoods and be a net producer of land based products.
8. The project will conduct and publish research about the development.
9. The development will embrace and support the Welsh language

### **Objective One Outlined**

1. All developments will have a small ecological impact.

The CIC will have its own independently verified planning system in place that will cover all structures/buildings on the site. Any structure/building will need the approval of the Community Interest Company (CIC) management committee before going to the local authority for its approval. The CIC's planning procedure will be exclusively concerned with the low-impact nature of the development and as such will need a full set of plans/drawings/specifications including thermal calculations and material source lists for approval. Applications will be considered on a point scoring system based on the ecological impact of the development. The designs will be graded on the following criteria:-

- Use of appropriate materials. Materials used should be of low embodied energy, low environmental impact and, where possible, sourced locally or be recycled.
- Use of renewable energy. The project will generate its own electricity and be independent of the national grid. All buildings should incorporate passive solar heating.

- Low visual impact. Buildings should appear unobtrusive, blending with the natural world that surrounds them.
- Recycling of water and waste. Building design needs to demonstrate an integrated approach to water run off and use. Composting of human waste should also be thoroughly considered.
- High thermal efficiency. It is expected that all dwellings will have a remarkably high thermal efficiency in order to reduce heating fuel consumption.
- Scale. Development should be of a modest scale.

In order to cover the costs of processing planning applications the CIC may levy a small charge. This "low impact evaluation" will be subcontracted to an independent planning consultant.

To secure this objective in the long term, the renewal of the residential leases will be conditionally tied to the requirement that all development passes the "low impact evaluation".

In a worse case scenario, where a resident chooses to develop without the CIC's approval, and after repeated requests, refuses to remedy the situation, it will be the management team's obligation to pass the matter on to their solicitor who will begin an eviction and repossession process.

The project as a whole will endeavour to demonstrate a one planet ecological footprint, and therefore residents will need to be willing to have their dwellings and lifestyles analysed for research. The results of this will be fed back to inform household practice.

## **Objective Two Outlined**

2. The natural wealth and biodiversity of the land will be enhanced.

A full habitat survey will be undertaken before planning permission is applied for. A professional environmental consultant will undertake this. It is intended this survey be complemented by more detailed species surveys conducted in partnership with local conservation groups and academic research institutions. Indeed, these detailed surveys will mark the starting point for a long-term study of the project's environmental impact.

During site and building works care will be taken not to cause any environmental damage. Any areas of notable environmental value (e.g. broadleaf woodland, hedgerows, and wetland) will be acknowledged and incorporated into the site plan in such a way as to conserve and preserve their natural value. Any existing wildlife corridors will be noted and conserved. For land division purposes we will fence and plant hedgerows of native broadleaf. We will be creating a network of small fields/forestry plots that will each be managed individually. It is intended that they will have organic status and thus all activities within these plots will be overseen by the Soil Association. In time, many individual ecosystems will establish themselves on the site leading to what we hope will be an impressive increase in biodiversity.

### Objective Three Outlined

3. The settlement will become integrated into the local community and will be an asset to the local economy.

Lammas held a meeting with neighbours of Pont y Gafel on April 22nd and introduced the concept of a low impact settlement.

Lammas held a second public meeting on June 10<sup>th</sup>, which was facilitated by an independent researcher (Dr Jenny Pickerill of Leicester University). The proposal was described in full and a feedback process was established. An independent report of the meeting was then compiled.

Many of the report's recommendations have now been integrated into the proposal.

We recognise the importance of open negotiations and consultations with local people in order to foster the spirit of mutual understanding and respect. We hope that the low impact nature of the development, coupled with the many local benefits, will lead to local people appreciating the advantages of the development.

Local benefits will include:

- a. **A boost for local businesses** - Owing to the project's low impact ethos, residents will naturally shop locally and make full use of local businesses, products and trades. Visitors to the settlement will also be encouraged to shop locally.
- b. **Rights of way** – The project will create a network of footpaths for public use through the site, opening up the land for walkers.
- c. **Local housing** - The provision of affordable housing for locals with low impact aspirations at the outset of the project.
- d. **Affordable Housing** - A pool of affordable housing in the future.
- e. **A wider range of local produce** - The settlement will add to the local economy by offering a range of skills, crafts and produce. The CIC will encourage businesses developed within the settlement to consult locally in order to complement, rather than compete with, existing small businesses in neighbouring towns and villages.

### Objective Four Outlined

4. The project will offer the opportunity of affordable housing for local people.

Adjacent to the proposed site is a series of semi derelict traditional farm buildings clustered around a courtyard. At present they are the subject of a planning application for conversion to six houses. These were originally intended for sale on the open market.

Lammas has been working with the owner (Sue Grimshaw), Grwp Gwalia and Cymdeithas Tai Cantref towards a development that meets local needs. A proposal is being considered in which the farm buildings would be developed in an environmentally conscious way to provide affordable housing for local people; a mix of rented accommodation and units for sale.

In addition to this Lammas are keen to provide the opportunity for local people to become directly involved with the project.

We are proposing including a local bias in any selection procedure.

In the long term the CIC will stipulate that residential leases must be passed on to people who are existing residents of SW Wales.

The CIC will also have the power to introduce an upper limit on lease - transfer values, to ensure that all property in the settlement remains affordable in the long term.

### **Objective Five Outlined**

5. There will be an effective traffic reducing strategy in place.

The aim of the project is to secure the low-impact nature of the settlement while prescribing as little as possible regarding its day to day running. Consequently we are reluctant to burden the CIC with the ownership or management of shared vehicles. Instead, we propose a vehicle pass licensing system, whereby residents buy the right to use a vehicle on the CIC's land. This annual fee would be high (about £300) in an attempt to discourage vehicle ownership and encourage private car-share schemes to operate between residents. The revenue from this scheme will be collected and offered to local minibus/bus companies as a subsidy for providing a comprehensive direct transport service to local villages, schools and towns. Our aim would be to achieve a vehicle to house ratio of 1:2 (i.e. one car for every two households). We will set ourselves a maximum ratio of 2:3. Should the vehicle to house ratio exceed 1:2, the annual vehicle pass fee would rise accordingly to bring this ratio down. For example, in the first stage of the project the settlement will consist of 12 units; our aim is that there be about six vehicles raising about £1800 annually to subsidize a minibus service. Should there be eight or more vehicles, the cost of the vehicle pass would rise until the vehicle numbers dropped. We envisage that the minibus service would still charge passengers per journey. Tractors or vehicles under 150cc will not be included in the scheme. Cycling and walking will be actively encouraged through adequate provision of cycle ways and footpaths.

### **Objective Six Outlined**

6. The settlement will welcome visitors and have a clearly defined visitor policy.

It is likely that the project will, due to its innovative nature, attract visitors. Most of these will be attracted to the exploration of principles of sustainability. It is important that examples of low impact development are available for people to experience. Low impact development offers one potential solution to the challenge of addressing climate change and limiting fossil fuel consumption.

It is equally important to balance the project's contribution to a wider sustainability transition with the need to ensure that visitors' travel arrangements are also low impact.

Thus it is proposed that the CIC has a policy that welcomes visitors within a clearly defined framework. This framework will be designed to minimise visitor vehicle use. The settlement will have very clearly defined open days; once a week during winter and twice a week during summer. These will be timed so that they coordinate with public transport links.

During these open days residents of the settlement will give guided tours of the project. The CIC will charge a fee for the tours. This fee will vary according to the visitor's travel arrangements, for example:

For those who travel by car - £30 per vehicle.

For those who travel by public transport/ small motorbike - £3 per person.

For those who travel by bicycle/ horse or on foot - £1 per person.

These fees will be set to discourage visitors arriving with their own vehicles.

The CIC will also explore the options available for providing a shuttle minibus service for visitors to and from local towns.

Access to the settlement will be from the Llanfrynach to Glandwr road. At the entrance to the site will be a gateway featuring a notice board, which will clearly display when the settlement is open and closed.

The project will include a small camping area to accommodate working/ educational visitors. The charges for this facility will be similarly linked to visitor's travel arrangements.

There will be a community hub building on the site. This will be a small low impact structure. It will provide a meeting place for both community members and visitors. Indeed, it will be the starting point for guided walks and tours. This building will also house the Company Office.

### **Objective Seven Outlined**

7. The project will support land based sustainable livelihoods and be a net producer of land based products.

Each household will be required, before becoming a lease holder, to submit a thoroughly considered Sustainable Livelihood Plan to both the CIC and Pembrokeshire Planning Authority for approval. Details of this can be found in policy 50 and the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) in Pembrokeshire's Joint Unitary Development Plan (JUDP).

Each household will have access to at least four acres on which to develop a land based livelihood.

Lammas is aiming for a settlement of a total (after stage two is completed) of 25 low impact smallholdings, phased over 10 years. This figure has been reached following both direct experience and research of land based living. First, to create a sustainable land based lifestyle is enormously challenging. The farming community will affirm that in today's economic climate there is very little money to be made from the land. This coupled with the challenges of environmentally conscious living (for example, reducing one's travel needs) creates an adverse environment for low impact smallholders. It is Lammas' conviction that it is only through establishing a sufficiently large group of low

impact holdings that the potential of the project as a model for sustainable development can be fully realised.

With the momentum of the group helping to sustain the project in the long term, a local economy centred around land based productivity will flourish. A culture of low impact lifestyles will grow and provide support and inspiration both within the project and beyond.

The CIC will explore the provision for all the agriculture/forestry plots to be organically certified so that residents will be able to sell their produce with an organic label.

### **Objective Eight Outlined**

8. The project will conduct and publish research about the development.

Lammas aims to promote low impact development as a tool for realising Wales's sustainability aims. Lammas will facilitate a research team to conduct and evaluate the project's success. The research will primarily be concerned with:

1. The settlement's ecological footprint.
2. The settlement's impact on the land in terms of habitat and biodiversity.
3. The impact of the settlement on the local economy and community.

### **Objective Nine Outlined**

9. The development will embrace and support the Welsh language

Lammas is currently drafting a Welsh language policy.

Lammas is keen to create a settlement in which the Welsh language can thrive. To this end Lammas proposes to create a selection process that has a weighting in favour of Welsh speakers.

### **Proposed Timescale**

#### **Phase One**

August 2005 - May 2006

As a constituted organisation with members, Lammas will create a viable and well thought out plan for the project. Lammas will liaise with planners and legal professionals as well as its own members to ensure that all aspects of the project have been thoroughly considered. Lammas will then seek a suitable site. After a site has been found, Lammas will prepare a well considered design for the settlement. Lammas will also initiate a community consultation process.

#### **Phase Two**

May 2006 – February 2007

Lammas will continue to consult with members, professionals and local people and work toward a thoroughly considered proposal. Lammas will also open a dialogue with Local

Authority Planners and will consult with them during the design process. Lammas will create a selection process to select members for the first stage (12 plots). Lammas will allocate the plots. Lammas will create an excellent planning application. Lammas will then apply for outline planning permission.

### **Phase Three**

[February 2007 – May 2007](#)

Lammas will, after attaining outline planning permission, create a CIC (Community Interest Company) to buy the land. The CIC will insure the land with public liability insurance. The CIC will sell the residential leases.

### **Phase Four**

[May 2007 – August 2007](#)

The CIC will purchase the land. The CIC will develop the site's infrastructure (i.e. services, tracks etc.). The CIC will set up its planning procedures.

### **Phase Five**

[August 2007 – August 2012](#)

There will be a five year period for the first stage of the development to establish itself. Lammas will demonstrate the success and viability of the project.

### **Phase Six**

[August 2012 – Onwards](#)

The CIC will apply for planning permission for the second stage of the settlement, a further 13 dwellings. The CIC will then purchase the land required for the second stage. Lammas will continue to research the project.

### **Next Steps**

- Lammas will continue to consult with local people, members and professionals about the proposal.
- Lammas will employ a researcher to survey the local economy. In particular, Lammas is keen to identify local land based businesses and create a proposal that supports and encourages these existing businesses.

### **Thanks**

Finally, we would like to thank the many people who have helped us get this far. They are too many to mention.