

Ecologia Trust Annual Report 2005

Ten Years of Ecologia Trust's charitable work in Russia

Ecologia was registered as a Scottish Charity in September 1995. When we reflect on how we began supporting Kitezh Children's Community with plenty of energy and goodwill and no funds at all, 2005 has proved to be an exceptionally successful year in Ecologia Trust's history. During those ten years, we have grown in stature and developed the capacity to inspire both individuals and grant-making bodies to make substantial contributions to our work with Kitezh. Ecologia Trust has been the recipient of several grants, notably from Charity Know How, Partnerships in the Non-Profit Sector, the Community Fund, The Funding Network, the Big Lottery Fund and DEFRA with the British Council.

The generosity of over 400 individual donors from all over the world has helped Kitezh to grow from one house with two families and six children in 1995 to the beautiful village that it is today, home to 20 adults and 35 children. Outdoor toilets and cold running water are a thing of the past. Four young Kitezh graduates are supported in their university studies by donations from kind people. All the children have summer holidays by the seaside thanks to Godparents' contributions. Individual donors made it possible to begin building Orion, the second children's village in the Kitezh network of the future. All this started from one man's great idea, followed by one woman's wild notion to support him!

During the course of these ten years, Ecologia has provided extensive training in social work, therapeutic practices and community building for the Kitezh residents. Key people involved include Margery Bray, Barbara Smedley, Christine Taylor, Theresa O'Neill, Jocelyn Jones, Dena Domminney and David Dean OBE. As a result Play Therapy is an integral part of the work with children and therapeutic education practices are becoming increasingly professional. Input for community building came from Andrew Murray, Rosie Turnbull and Liza Hollingshead and the Game of Transformation has been embraced by the community as an annual team building exercise.

Over 150 volunteers and visitors from all over the world have visited Kitezh over this period.

The Kitezh youngsters have benefited from exchanges with the Findhorn Youth Project and participation in Findhorn ecovillage trainings and youth programmes. We intend to organise another youth exchange to the UK with the next generation of Kitezh teenagers next year. Any offers of hospitality in London will be most welcome.

Now to the successes of 2005.

As the capacity building project funded by the Community Fund was drawing to a close, after working hard together for two years, ironing out difficulties and at last starting to make an impact in Moscow, both Ecologia and Kitezh felt about ready to begin. Writing the follow-up application together was an exercise in cooperation and common vision. But would we succeed in the face of far greater competition internationally than ever before? The announcement that the Big Lottery Fund accepted our application was confirmation that others besides ourselves believed sufficiently in our vision to support us with a further three years' funding. As we listed the project activities it was satisfying to note that in every case the project outcomes were precisely in line with what Kitezh aims to accomplish. The funding has taken the pressure off on how to accomplish it all. The new project is nearing the end of its first year and is on target.

Training for increased professionalism continued. David Dean made his annual consultancy visit and organised a Best Practice tour in Scotland for two key young leaders from Kitezh to four well regarded residential projects for young people. They also participated in the Global Ecovillage Network Conference at the Findhorn Foundation. Psychological training and consultancy by a Russian psychologist is in place. Kitezh ran three camps for orphans and five new children have homes in Kitezh-Orion. Four Kitezh graduates were supported in their University studies with a view to returning to live and work in Kitezh-Orion.

The Kitezh Centre welcomed a new British volunteer, Esther Daniels to continue Dena Fisher's excellent work establishing a presence for Kitezh within the ex-pat community in Moscow. Her first coup after only a month was to persuade the British Women's Club choir to sponsor Kitezh in their Christmas charity concert.



Influencing the opinion of government bodies is an important aspect of this project's criteria, and one that is often difficult to quantify. Dmitry Morozov's book, *A Guide for Foster Families*, received positive feedback from professionals and foster families alike. The Russian Federation's Order of Honour for his work with orphans and education, was tangible proof that his work is recognised at the highest government level and that the 'Kitezh way' can now influence the way that orphans in institutions and in foster families are treated.



The energetic building programme at Orion has continued unabated. With support from generous British and American donors and from western companies based in Russia, Orion was able to add two new log houses to the large house built the year before, and install a gas line and a water supply. The current major project that will take two years to complete is the Education Centre, built in the round, to house classrooms, an auditorium and indoor sports facility. Two young families and two teachers live permanently in Orion with five children and another large family is due to join them early in 2006. Orion and Kitezh are committed to keeping a close relationship between them and all year there was a steady flow of groups of children and adults between the two locations.

A significant step towards sustainability was the SEPS-3 project to build Reedbed wetlands in both Kitezh and Orion to deal with the problem of waste water. Funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and managed by the British Council, this project fulfilled a dream held for many years that was simply not possible to achieve without this support. It is a testament to the commitment of the Kitezh team of builders and to our consultants Galen Fulford and Lisa Shaw that building both wetlands was accomplished in a mere three weeks. They will be planted out in spring 2006 after which they will be fully functional.



Volunteering continues to appeal to young and old alike. In addition to sending 16 young volunteers to Kitezh this year and a second group from the Princes Trust, we ran a successful small group tour for adult visitors to Kitezh in the spring. We hope to attract more mature visitors as they bring a special gift of their wisdom to the community and are made most welcome. Our volunteers find their own place within the community's life and each one is remembered and appreciated for their unique contribution. Very often their feedback is how much they grew up while they were at Kitezh and they consistently mention how wonderful the children are.

Godparents are once more needed for the new children. The children love exchanging letters and gifts with their foreign 'Godparents' and Godparents enjoy it too. Their financial support is so much appreciated as it enables Kitezh to do special things for the children that normally they would not be able to.



Ecologia Trust's financial position was improved by these projects and the generosity of a number of private donors who contributed to administration for the home charity. We live again! We reluctantly said goodbye to our bookkeeper Christianne Hartsthorne and administrators Rhiannon Hanfman and Claudia Johnson, and are happy to welcome Maria-Jesus Calvo and Stewart Spreadborough to our team. In September 2005 Ecologia Trust was registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee with charitable status, and we welcomed Tom Disney, Henrietta Rose and Jemma Jupp to the new Board. The charity registration number remains the same.

Looking Forward to 2006

- * Youth Exchange for the next generation of Findhorn Youth Project and Kitezh teenagers: £8,000 each way
- * Orion: Education Centre – building, equipment, furnishing over two years
- * Kitezh: family home renovations to convert attic spaces into extra bedrooms

Our heartfelt thanks as always to our supporters, donors and volunteers as we look forward to another productive year ahead. We wish you all a very Happy New Year!



Liza Hollingshead
Executive Director