

*The event in Marburg, organised by Angus Fowler and the ECOVAST German Section went over 3 days – 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> October 2016*

## **A: ECOVAST GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**22<sup>nd</sup> October 2016: 10.00 am**

**Venue: Philipshaus, Universitätsstrasse 30; D 35037 MARBURG, GERMANY**

## **AGENDA**

### **1. Welcome by Valerie Carter**

Valerie Carter President welcomed all those attending this General Assembly for 2016 in Marburg, Germany

She thanked Phil Turner and Angus Fowler for their work in arranging this committee meeting in Marburg and thanked ECOVAST Germany who were acting as our hosts. She also thanked Pam Moore for keeping her in touch with Phil's emails as there was a continuing problem that her email system repeatedly refused to acknowledge Phil except as 'Spam;..:

She outlined the programme of meetings over the next few days:

- 22 October 2016 Morning meeting of the General Assembly followed by the 1<sup>st</sup> afternoon excursion; followed by dinner with the Deputy Mayor of Marburg as our guest
- 23<sup>rd</sup> October – Morning meeting of General Assembly ECOVAST Germany followed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> afternoon excursion
- 24<sup>th</sup> October meeting with the Landkreis

**Present were:** Valerie Carter (President); Angus Fowler (Senior Vice President); Andrea Weigert (Treasurer); International Committee members; Gerhard Fasching of ECOVAST Austria (also representing Arthur Spiegler and Brigitte Macaria) and his wife, Sylvia Mayer, Olaf Linke (Germany) and Phil Turner and Pam Moore (UK). Ralf Bokermann, Ivar Henckel, Max Linke and Peter Thran. all of ECOVAST Germany, and Michael Strecker as long-term ECOVAST friend were also present

We also welcomed a guest Ulrich Althaus – the Marburg Curator of the German Foundation for the Preservation of Historic Monuments. He was to spend the next three days at the ECOVAST meetings

### **2. Apologies**

Vice Presidents; Arthur Spiegler (A); Tihana Stepinac Fabijanic (HR) and Magdalena Banu (RO):

International Committee members: Enrico Capo (I); Calin Hoinarescu (RO); Olga Sevan (RU);

Irmelin Küttner (D) had expected to attend but had fallen ill at the last minute and was unable to attend. We all sent our best wishes to her via Angus Fowler

### **3. Approval of Agenda:**

The agenda for this General Assembly prepared by Phil Turner was approved

### **4. Minutes of Last Meeting**

The minutes of last General Assembly – the Biennial Assembly held Frantiskove Lazne, Czech Republic in March 2015 were approved. This meeting had been delayed from 2014 to allow for an Extraordinary Meeting (EGM) of the General Assembly to be held to agree on changes to our ECOVAST Statutes. That EGM had been held in Frantiskove Lazne the day before the Biennial Assembly which ratified the changes agreed to the statutes.

## **5. Matters Arising from the Biennial Assembly:**

(a) The main decision to extend the ECOVAST work on small towns to a more in-depth look at the Danube Basin area – resulted in a new publication – a companion document to ‘The Importance of Small Towns’ which was taken to the Danube Participation Day in Ulm 2016 where Tihana Stepanic Fabijanac had asked for a workshop to be held on small towns. That had been agreed and Valerie Carter represented ECOVAST at that event, prepared and displayed a series of posters at the event and staged a small workshops which appeared to be of real interest to the Ukraine and Serbia. Copies of the original ECOVAST publication and the companion document were taken to that event and given out – hopefully giving more publicity to our work on small towns. Several copies were being taken to the main Danube Forum event.

(b) The second decision to look at the possibility of preparing a ‘Friends of ECOVAST’ Certificate’ to send out to those who have worked closely with us is still being worked on. This is referred to below in the short report on the dinner with the Deputy Mayor of Marburg and in the German General Assembly.

## **6. Report from the latest International Committee**

(a) This was held the previous evening on Friday 21 October 2016. All those present at that meeting are present at this ECOVAST General Assembly and copies of the minutes will be circulated as soon as they are finished. There are some decisions that were made at that meeting that need to be ratified by this General Assembly – and they are noted below where appropriate.

(b) It needs to be commented again that the absence of a Secretary General is deeply felt – although Phil Turner and Valerie Carter try to do the work between them – and a new Secretary General does need to be found.

## **7. Financial Reports**

(a) Report from Treasurer

Andrea Weigert gave a brief account of the International ECOVAST Account. Although it is not quite the end of this financial year and some subscription income is still to come in from ECOVAST Austria. The International Account still owes money to the ECOVAST UK account which pays some international bills. Phil Turner will complete the UK Account for 2016 by the end of December.

The assembly thanked Andrea for her work keeping the ECOVAST accounts and was congratulated on her report that the ECOVAST bank account was reasonably healthy.

### **Action 1 2016GA Agreed**

**Andrea Weigert to send members of the ECOVAST Bureau (President, and Vice Presidents a copy of the final ECOVAST International Account and this can then be circulated to the Members of the International Committee by the President**

It should be noted that the ECOVAST International Accounts for 2013, 2014 or 2015 had not yet been audited – a specific requirement in our Statutes. Rudiger Maul (deceased) and Irmelin Küttner (wished to resign) were the previous auditors but we must now appoint new ones. After some discussion:

### **Action 2 2016GA agreed**

**Peter Thran and Ivar Henckel agreed to take on the role of ECOVAST auditors and would undertake the audit of the outstanding accounts (see later report as this action has now been completed)**

(b) **The UK ECOVAST Account**

Phil Turner reported that there is an outstanding amount of money still owed to the UK Account from the ECOVAST International account. The UK pays for some international activity such as web-hosting but in turn has to pay two thirds of the UK subscriptions. The UK Accounts for 2016 will record all this. (At the end of 2015 ECOVAST International account still owed ECOVAST UK was £535.52. This will increase by the end of December 2016, due to some postage for Statutes work and web hosting and the costs of Valerie Carter's trip to Tellow (see below) which will be paid by ECOVAST UK and added to the amount owed by ECOVAST International).

*An end of year reckoning will be completed at the end of December 2016.*

*There is no intention at the present time for ECOVAST International to reimburse the amount owing to the UK – this will avoid all the costs of different currencies and bank fees for exchange rate – as long as the International Account has a clear 'credit' owing to the UK Account in its final reckoning.*

**Action 3 2016GA Agreed**

**Phil Turner to send Andrea Weigert a final report of the ECOVAST UK Account at the end of the year with all income received; amount owed to the ECOVAST International Account from subscriptions and the final amount that ECOVAST International account owes the UK for the international work/expenses – so that Andrea Weigert can note the amount of credit owed on the ECOVAST International Account at the end of December 2016.**

Valerie Carter reported that PREPARE was no longer supported by the Mott Foundation but was asking for donations from its partners. Valerie requested that ECOVAST make a donation of 50 Euros to be sent to PREPARE (this is the same cost as our membership of CIVILSCAPE. The committee agreed to this request

**Action 4 2016GA Agreed:**

**The ECOVAST Treasurer, Andrea Weigert send a donation of Euros 50 to the PREPARE Treasurer for their funding campaign.**

**8. Report on the National Sections**

Each of the 10 ECOVAST National Sections and their activities was reported. This knowledge is from emails from the National Sections and information known to the international members of ECOVAST.

- **Austrian Section:** Arthur and Brigitte have ambitions to play an official role in the annual "Day of the Cities", to be held in 2017 in "Zell am See" in the province of Salzburg, and will produce a paper on the "Future of Small Historic Towns". However, Arthur Spiegler has health problems and other active members are few. There is no further progress on the "European Green Belt" (Former Iron Curtain). However, in 2015, Angus Fowler has supplied Arthur with much information on small towns along the German part of the Green Belt, for future use.
- **German Section:** Angus Fowler, Chairman, indicated in October 2015 the difficulty of securing people to undertake activity and that closing down the section had been considered. However, because the Section has commitment to support a research contract involving the Linke consultancy that continues until 2021, it is important for ECOVAST Germany to survive for another five years. The response to an email of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2016 stated that the German Section had indicated the will to survive and that feeling is now stronger. He says that It is important that no damage is done to ECOVAST as an organisation and that those who wish to continue (such as the Germans - more specifically the Förderkreis Alte Kirchen Marburg - who together with Francis Noel-Baker were the driving force behind the foundation of ECOVAST in 1984) can do so.

- **Croatian Section** which in recent years has been very active, but there are indications that the situation is not promising. Tihana is unable to be involved for family reasons and her contacts with members have practically ceased. She says: “It is a great pity that it came to this, but in a way a similar situation is presently in most of our Sections – people are either not interested to participate, have not time or cannot afford it.” Tihana has been involved in the EU Danube Strategy, and the Danube Declaration was adopted in February 2016.
- **The UK Section** has only a very few members. Valerie Carter (Chairman and also President of ECOVAST International for 2016 and 2017), Pam Moore, Phil Turner and Michael Dower, (Hon Member). Rosalind Rutt had also said she wished to remain a member. No response had been received from other UK members. Phil and Pam will resign on 31 December 2016 from the International Committee and as members of ECOVAST. There will be a UK meeting before the end of 2016, to decide how the bank account can continue to operate, with Valerie and Michael as signatories (currently Valerie and Pam sign cheques). Valerie continues to be active with PREPARE, and to promote her work for ECOVAST on Small Towns. However, the UK Section have no plans/project of their own. The Section is not registered as an NGO (Charity/Company) and has operated as a club/society.
- **Romania**; Calin Hoinarescu and Magdalena Banu say that the Section meets from time to time, a group of people from the different nationalities/ethnic groups in Romania, not very young, but working well together, like a family. They are interested to know how ECOVAST activity will be after BREXIT, and now are worried about the future of the organisation with a border between the UK and European Member States.
- **Russia**: Olga Sevan continues with ICOMOS and her work on Wooden Buildings with conferences and publications but has now changed her place of work becoming Professor for Art History. However, there does not seem to be an active Russian Section.
- **Hungary**: Members of the Hungarian Section have been involved in rural development, including LEADER.

It is important to report that we have no current knowledge of activity in **Macedonia (FYROM), Poland, or Slovakia** - although Poland does occasionally send documents of the events they stage under the ECOVAST name. There is the impression that these Sections may see ECOVAST International as a useful “brand” in promoting their own personal activity, or as a group, without reporting to, or communicating by any method with, ECOVAST as a parent body.

The problems with the National Sections and what they were doing had been discussed at the ECOVAST International Committee yesterday and a **plan of campaign to take action had been suggested**. It is relevant to state to the General Assembly the actions that were agreed there.

**Action 5 2016 GA suggested:**

**Each section should go to its members – preferably through direct phone calls rather than emails that are often not answered to find out if they are still active / wish to become more active/ or not**

**Action 6 2016 GA suggested:**

**Members of the ECOVAST Bureau would follow up with the National Sections of Macedonia, Poland, Russia and Slovakia by phone if possible to find out if they are still active. All have been active and valued members in past years. However, they are supposed to send a report every year to state their activities and their membership fees. ECOVAST International must be sure that they are acting in accordance with ECOVAST objectives and are supposed to send in a contribution of their membership fees collected every year (however small that may be)**

**If they refuse to answer all these enquiries the International Committee can take action and they will no longer be recognised as a National Section of this international organisation and have no right to use the name 'ECOVAST'**

It has also been brought to the attention of the International Committee that when ECOVAST Austria visited Greece recently Greece an inquiry was made about the European Rural Parliament and none of the Greek representatives at that meeting had heard anything about the ERP. It is unfortunately not uncommon that different 'rural groups' in a country know little about other groups. It is suggested that another action should be included in the plan of campaign:

**Another Action 7 2016 GA suggested:**

**Each National Section to:**

- **draw up a list of the key government and non-government organisations involved in rural development and other important national rural networks in their country (every European Member State has a formal National Rural Network and most countries in geographical Europe were represented at the European Parliament and many had expressed interest in issues listed in their published Manifesto – including small towns)**
- **and try to make contact with them to explain what ECOVAST is and does and keep them in touch by sending them the ECOVAST Newsletter.**

**Another Action 8 2016 GA suggested:**

**To keep in touch with our partners rural networks - make sure to send our ECOVAST Newsletter:**

- **to each of the country networks that make up PREPARE**
- **to CIVILSCAPE**
- **to EUROPA NOSTRA**
- **to EUROGITES**
- **possibly to the APURE network**

## **9. Report on Partner Organizations – in addition to the comments made by the President above**

**a. CIVILSCAPE:** ECOVAST International, and the ECOVAST National Sections of Hungary, Germany, and Croatia are also members. Angus Fowler, Irmelin Küttner of the German Section and Michael Strecker attended the CIVILSCAPE General Assembly on 10 October 2016 and their Conference held on 11/12 October in Berlin.

**b. Council of Europe:** ECOVAST International is an (inactive) member of the **Council of Europe** International Non Government Organisations (INGOs) that in recent years has focused upon human rights rather than interests in settlement planning and landscape. However Angus Fowler reports that Gerhard Ermischer, who has attended Council of Europe events since 2010, has made it clear at the recent CIVILSCAPE that there has been an improvement and the Council of Europe is now very active with regard to landscape issues (the CIVILSCAPE meeting was attended by the official landscape representative of the Council of Europe) and their General Assembly of NGOs is also now dealing not only with human rights' matters but also with other issues.

**c. PREPARE:** ECOVAST is a Founder Member of **PREPARE**. Registration in Belgium was completed in November 2015 (and ECOVAST helped considerably with that through its own registration procedure at the Tribunal Court in Séléstat, Alsace. Michael Dower is an active member. The **European Rural Parliament (ERP)** is co-organized by Michael Dower (co-partners PREPARE and the Swedish Rural Parliament) and ECOVAST has been a supporter in the securing of funding from the European Commission for an action programme and the October 2017 ERP Gathering. ECOVAST is a partner but not

financially involved and is not leading any strand of the action. However, funding for any ECOVAST involvement may be possible. Valerie has represented PREPARE on the European Commission's Civil Dialogue Group, from the time that ECOVAST itself lost a seat on that group (formerly the Rural Development Advisory Committee). Michael Dower is in favour of the survival of ECOVAST and has produced a detailed note on the relationships between ECOVAST and PREPARE, which can be reported at the IC meeting.

**d. European Heritage Alliance:** ECOVAST is a founder member of the **European Heritage Alliance** (hosted by Europa Nostra) and Phil Turner (now a Trustee and Treasurer of Europa Nostra UK) has attended meetings and he and Valerie Carter remain in touch. Angus Fowler attended its meeting mid-November in Leipzig immediately before the Monument Fair.

**e. EUROPA NOSTRA:** ECOVAST has roots in EUROPA NOSTRA and has been an organisation member until 2016, when the increased subscription of 250 Euro became unaffordable. There is now an offer of a reduced fee of 125 Euro for three years, and the International Committee agreed that this offer be accepted.

## **10. MAIN AGENDA ITEM - The Future of ECOVAST**

The Future of ECOVAST was discussed by the ECOVAST International Committee meeting yesterday. The paper prepared by Phil Turner which set out 2 Options – to continue or to close down and dissolve (also setting out how this must be done according to our Statutes) is set out here for the perusal of the General Assembly members present. It is set out in Italics below.

There is no objection to the National Sections continuing in their own countries as separate organisation BUT after discussion it was very clear that to do this they would have to disband as a sectional of an international organisation and set up again as a purely national organisation – this must be made clear to them.

The members of the General Assembly were informed that the International committee had voted overwhelmingly to continue but that direct activity suggested in the National Section report above – Actions 5,6,7 and 8 must be carried out.

### **Action 9 2016 GA agreed:**

**The members of the General Assembly voted for ECOVAST to continue. However this decision was for another year at least as the organisation was in a reasonable financial state but would need to be reviewed again at the biennial assembly in the autumn of 2017. New committee members must be found and elected at that meeting.**

## **11. Any Other Business**

### **(a) Obituaries of past members**

Members of the General Assembly should be aware of the deaths of the following ECOVAST members during 2016. They are Helmut Korzonnek (Germany) (Honorary Life Member) and Royston Edge (UK) (and who had also been a longstanding member of the French National Section many years ago as he spent much of his later professional life in south west France no! There never was a real French Section of ECOVAST and Royston got to know us I think after most of our French deserted us, A.F.). Our thoughts and memories of them have been set out in our Newsletter or will be recoded in our next Newsletter.

### **(b) Notice of resignation:**

The ECOVAST International Committee of yesterday received formal notice of two resignations from two Committee members, both from the United Kingdom, and both of them had being extremely strong and active members of ECOVAST over many years. Phil Turner was a Past President of ECOVAST International between ( ) and then Vice President

during ( ) and then as an elected Committee for 2015-2016: Pam Moore also member of the ECOVAST Bureau as Secretary General from to 2012 and UK International Committee since the formation of that section xxxxxx. Both these resignations would come into effect from 1 January 2017.

The General Assembly wishes to add their thanks to that of the International committee for their most valuable work and leadership within ECOVAST and we know that they will be missed very much. They were wished well for their futures. It was suggested that they should both be offered Life Membership so that they would not totally lose touch with the organisation (see below) although they would no longer be 'active members'.

**(c) Honorary Life Memberships:**

The following 4 names are put forward for receiving Honorary Life Membership of ECOVAST and agreed to be put forward to be ratified by the General Assembly

- Erika Maul of Germany – the widow of Rudiger Maul and who had been associated with his work.
- Christa Korzonnek – the widow of Helmut Korzonnek of Germany
- Pam Moore of the United Kingdom
- Phil Turner of the United Kingdom

**Action 10 2016 GA agreed:**

**The General Assembly agreed to ratify these names to become Honorary Life Members of ECOVAST. Erika Maul, Pam Moore and Phil Turner were agreed unanimously by those present and Christa Korzonnek of Germany agreed with 1 abstention.**

*Historical records show the following ECOVAST members have been awarded Honorary Life Membership: Bernard Mignon of Belgium; Angus Fowler, Helmut Korzonnek of Germany; Andras Roman of Hungary and Francis Noel Baker (the founder President); Edmund Neville Rolfe; and Michael Dower – of the United Kingdom. Horst Bruchmann, Detlev Simons, Gerda Stachowitz and Ursula Stratenwerth were made Honorary Members by the German Section.*

**Action 11 2016 GA agreed:**

**The Honorary Life Memberships of Horst Bruchmann, Detlev Simons, Gerda Stachowitz and Ursula Stratenwerth (deceased) were confirmed retrospectively by the General Assembly.**

**Action 12 2016 GA agreed:**

**The President of ECOVAST and Senior Vice President would send a formal email to the 4 people to confirm this decision.**

**(d) ECOVAST history**

The President reported to the International Committee yesterday that she is continuing with her work to write the history of the organisation since its beginning. It is a very lengthy task with only the 'bare bones' completed so far. It is not expected that this work will be completed until the end of 2017. She is to visit the office of the Förderkreis Alte Kirchen in the Weidenhäuser Strasse in Marburg on the 24<sup>th</sup> to look at some of its archives and then travel on to Tellow in Mecklenburg to the Thünen Museum where all of Michael Dower's archive material is stored. A claim to ECOVAST International Account will be made for this trip.

**Action 13 2016 GA agreed:**

**The expenses claim would be paid by ECOVAST UK bank account to avoid bank charges for currency changes, and the amount added to the amount owed to the UK**

## account by ECOVAST International Account by the end of 2016

### (e) Ralf Bokermann presented the Assembly with 2 papers:

“The Study on Small Towns in the Lower Oder area and West Pomerania” published in 2013

“The Adaption of Existing Building Stock with Declining Population” published in 2015

*The General Assembly Meeting closed 13.00 pm*

### **B: AFTERNOON EXCURSION 22<sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER**

The General Assembly was followed by two excursions. The first was on the afternoon of the 22nd October 2016 after the ECOVAST General Assembly. The first tour visited places in the Amoneburg Basin. It looked first at the Old Church in Burgeln village, then visited the very small town of Amoneburg perched on top of a former volcanic hill above the river Ohm. We went on to have tea and look around the Brücker Mill on the River Ohm (reported in our Newsletter 62) before our final visit to the small town of Kirchain.

The evening dinner after the first excursion was held in the Greek Restaurant ‘Irodion’. There were 3 guests: the Deputy Mayor of Marburg, Dr. Franz Kahle, Ulrich Althaus and the historian Professor Dr. Gerhard Menk

### **C: DINNER 22<sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER**

We welcomed the Mayor formally and presented him with a copy of the ECOVAST publication ‘The Importance of Small Towns’ and the book with the documentation of the ECOVAST German Section by Irmelin Küttner. The Deputy Mayor presented the ECOVAST President with a book on Marburg illustrating the city (written in German, French and English). Also during the meal the Mayor was asked if he would be a formal ‘friend of ECOVAST’ (no obligations but to recognise ECOVAST and exchange ideas. He agreed. Valerie and Ivor would develop the format of a friendship certificate and then send it to the Mayor signed by ECOVAST. We need to develop a protocol for this sort of ‘certificate’ to make sure it is always understood by those being invited to be ‘friends’. It is fitting that our **first ‘friend’** is from Marburg – the place where we were founded in 1984. We would also invite our other guest Ulrich Althaus to be a friend too.

### **23<sup>rd</sup> October 2016**

### **D: AN ADDENDUM TO THE GA MEETING 23<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER**

During the early morning (before the General Assembly of the German ECOVAST National Section) Andrea and the newly elected auditors Peter Thran and Ivor Henckel met and formally audited the ECOVAST accounts for 2013, 2014 and 2015 on behalf of the International Committee and presented their findings to the International President, Valerie Carter. The president offered her thanks on behalf of the General Assembly for the completion of this very necessary task and the promptness of the action.

### **E: 23<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER – WAS THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE GERMAN NATIONAL SECTION**

The International President, Valerie Carter, attended the beginning of the meeting and was welcomed by the Section and then returned later to the meeting to hear Gerhard Fasching present ideas about ‘Dark Tourism’ and the involvement of ECOVAST Austria and a plea for all ECOVAST to get involved.

### **The German National Section meeting – 23<sup>rd</sup> October at Philiphaus, Marburg**

1. The German ECOVAST Committee made a decision to be formally involved with the Green Belt project
2. The German ECOVAST Committee also wanted ECOVAST International to recognise the importance of the European Year of Cultural Heritage to be held in 2018. ECOVAST should aim to be involved in these celebrations and think ahead to how our 2018 meeting could take place in one of the places used during the year.
3. A presentation was made by Gerhard Fasching on the work the Austrian Section were exploring on the potential of the 'Dark Tourism'.

#### **F: AFTERNOON TOUR 23<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER**

This second tour visited the hinterland of Marburg to the west of the city. We visited the villages of Marburg-Dilschhausen, and Gladenbach-Bellnhausen with its timber-framed church, saved by the Förderkreis Alte Kirchen (Europa Nostra Prize 1981), the village where ECOVAST was founded in March 1984), Steffenberg- Niedereisenhausen (where we had tea in the old church, also saved by the Förderkreis Alte Kirchen, and looked at an old communal bakehouse), drove through the small town of Gladenbach, and finally visited the small hamlet of Kehna where former farm buildings had been converted into accommodation and workshops for disabled people.

#### **G: 24<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2016 – MEETING WITH LANDKREIS MARBURG-BIEDENKOPF**

A meeting was held where members of ECOVAST could meet members of the governing administrative body for the rural district area around Marburg– the Landkreis Marburg-Biedenkopf. They were welcomed by the District Chief Executive (Landrätin), Kirsten Frundt, and were given a presentation by the conservation officer, Cornelius Bettex, on the work of the District to preserve historic buildings and also on a project planned to maintain better and market redundant agricultural buildings. The press officer of the District attended and took photographs.

Those present from ECOVAST were Valerie Carter (President and United Kingdom); Angus Fowler (Senior Vice President), Michael Strecker and Peter Thran – all from Germany; and Gerhard Fasching and Sylvia Mayer from Austria. Our guest Ulrich Althaus also attended together with the local architectural historian, Dr. Jutta Schuchard

*This meeting marked the end of the ECOVAST event in Marburg 2016.*