

Interest Weekend Information

Joining Trelay will involve a combination of Experience Weeks and an Interest Weekend.

At present, we have the following living spaces available:

- A 3 bedroom detached house - becoming available in 2024
- A 3 bedroom semi-detached house also becoming available in 2024

On this page, we hope to give you enough information to decide whether to visit and consider becoming part of the Trelay adventure...

■ We are looking for people who are open and honest about their own dreams, and ready to listen and understand the dreams of others so that together we can build a new way of living sustainably and well. We certainly expect new people to be thinking of the group as a whole so that giving and receiving time and energy will come naturally. People with a passion for living on a smallholding, with a passion for learning and caring for animals and food growing are most likely to find their happy place here.

Wonderful, but not for everyone:

■ Living in the Trelay community is absolutely wonderful in many respects, but community living is not for everyone, and some people find they can't get on with communal decision-making, the emotional intensity and the difficulties of sharing things and living with people with different views from themselves.

■ It is easy to visit Trelay and see it as a sort of paradise on Earth, and it is true, the farm itself is stunningly beautiful, near the sea and a wonderful coastline, and there are friendly people all around. However, it is not always paradise here.

■ There is mud and there are gales. There are arguments and all the usual human difficulties. We have 9 dogs and 3 cats, which can bring much love or sometimes, aggravation. Also, it can be quite expensive to live here: we have a mortgage of a million pounds. So everyone who comes here needs to be prepared to work hard, raise money to pay their share, and practise tolerance and forgiveness too.

But if this is the place for you, then you may find that it is the best way of life you have ever known!

History, living spaces, projects:

Back in 2006, a group of people decided to set up a small intentional community in the southwest of England. They moved into Trelay Farm in April 2007. They wanted to live in harmony with nature and with each other. When they bought Trelay, there was a farmhouse and several farm buildings converted into cottages with residential planning permission. Over the years, two log cabins were built, some of the houses got divided into flats, and members converted a derelict cow barn and a derelict pig barn into lovely living units. One resident then built a loft conversion – there are now 13 separate living spaces. The main communal space is the ground floor of the farmhouse. We have

fully renovated it with new windows, radiators and rewiring which makes it a lovely cosy space. All of the original founding members have now left Trelay.

Over the years the people living at Trelay have developed many food growing projects on the 32 acres, including meat from pigs, sheep and cows. We have chickens. We grow soft fruit and have a vegetable patch of about 800 square meters. There is a polytunnel and a greenhouse. We now have a forest garden of circa 1 acre. We have woodland. We have a forest garden of circa 1 acre. We have a nut grove.

We have installed three sets of solar PV systems: 20KW on the Green Barn, 4.7KW on the Farmhouse and 5.2KW as a ground array in a field. We have two ground source heat pumps. We have two Tesla Powerwall Lithium-Ion batteries to store solar energy. We have installed an Air Source heat pump. We have rainwater harvesting. We have tapped an underground stream to water the veg patch. An electric car is co-owned by a few members. We have recently extended our on-site sewage processing plant and reed bed. We have installed a borehole and a water treatment plant so we use all our own water from below the land. We have installed central heating in almost all the houses.

We have three holiday cabins, which we built ourselves, with one more planned as part of our move towards sustainable businesses. We also have a thriving summertime camping business.

Living spaces

Because of the opportunities afforded by our communal spaces, individual living units can be quite small, thus saving materials and energy. Although the living spaces generally have working kitchens, many of us often eat together in the Farmhouse, with sofas, a log fire and board games in the cupboard. Other communal spaces include the big Green Barn with a wood workshop, a gym, personal storage areas, a camp kitchen, communal toilets and showers. We also have a communal games room, home office; a food store; a log store; and a laundry.

Trelay Finances

■ The important thing to note is that our living costs are not cheaper than anywhere else in Cornwall. The financial setup is difficult to describe fully in a document – you really do need to come to talk to us face-to-face. Before you progress to living here on a try-out basis, you will be told how people “buy” into Trelay. A new community member makes a financial commitment to a property, either in the form of cash or by sharing our mortgage. **We do not rent spaces here; we all “buy-in” to Trelay.**

■ Simply put, each of our living spaces has a value that includes a share of the land and communal buildings. After visiting several times, you stay on-site with us on a trial basis, with a rental fee, for up to 6 months, to make sure you wish to commit to Trelay and vice versa. Then you put in the agreed value as cash that is available to you. Technically your capital is a loan against the living space (we call it an “equity loan agreement”).

■ If you don't have enough capital, you take on a “mortgage commitment” and agree to make a monthly payment for part of the mortgage we already have. We have a good mortgage with Triodos and a share of it is made available to incoming members where possible.

■ When you want to leave, you get your money back when a new person is found to come in and join the community and take on the financial commitment on that space (similar to selling a house that you own). If you have taken responsibility for part of the mortgage, you will also get back most of the capital you have paid to reduce the mortgage loan, minus the interest payments which Triodos keeps.

- This Trelay Mutual Home Ownership (TMHO) model enables people with less capital than others to share our mortgage and thus to 'buy-in' to Trelay. However, it does depend on having a fairly high proportion of our residents putting in capital; otherwise, the whole thing is not financially viable.
- NB: *At the moment, any properties becoming available will likely need some capital input, as well as an ability to take on your share of the mortgage moving forward.*

Under the TMHO model, because we all own everything, where you live is flexible. You can move into one space and then (by agreement with the community) move over to another space that suits you better, with a suitable adjustment to your equity loan agreement, but no stamp duty or solicitor's fees. Over the years, we have found that people have often moved to Trelay into a living space which is not their favourite, then moved when the one they really wanted becomes free.

Residents, whether on the way to joining or full members, pay a monthly service charge which we agree between ourselves. This is currently £200 per month per adult and pays for electricity, gas, logs, water, insurance, repairs of commonly owned property such as lawn mowers and gardening equipment and part of the mortgage for communal spaces. The service charge is set yearly by consensus decision. In addition, Council Tax is payable by each member. We pay for communal food separately.

To summarise, as a resident you will pay:

1. Your mortgage contribution for your living unit, unless you have paid TMHO in full as a capital contribution
2. Service Charge, fixed until changed by communal consent, currently £195 per adult / month
3. Council Tax: fixed by the local council and specific to your living space, circa £100/month
4. Communal Food: Members operate an optional food/shopping group, whereby you pay for what food you have at cost

You should bear in mind that your other major outgoing will likely be transport. Members car and lift-share as much as possible but it's important to be aware that this is a very rural area, and it can cost £3k a year to run a car.

Earning a living

We also live in the real world and people coming to live here need to have a sufficient income: either a job or a business that will become viable before long.

You might choose to develop an onsite business or look into locally available jobs.

Expectations

We tell new members that we expect the following:

We require you to sign the Covenant, which is a heart-felt promise to each other. We have identified a set of values and we all promise each other to try to live in accordance with these values. In essence, these are a deep commitment to caring for oneself, caring for each other and caring for the planet.

This is a community, which involves people spending time with each other and developing relationships. This can be hard when we all have plenty of other time commitments including family,

work, friends etc so we ask people to consider whether they are able and willing to make the time commitment. Community time might involve spending time with others cooking or food growing or looking after farm animals or fencing or building a polytunnel or chicken-run, harvesting and preserving etc. There are many non-food-growing community tasks including cleaning, nurturing, building and administration. At the end of the day, it's a question of being willing to commit to the relationship with others here. It takes time and effort . Like most healthy relationships, you get out what you put in.

Other ways that members are usually involved: Become a Director, sharing the necessary job of looking after the Company that owns Trelay. Share responsibility: for ensuring everything we do is legal, official paperwork, health and safety, animal welfare etc. We expect Trelay to be your main residence, and we expect you to invest appropriately, following a full financial review. This means if you have sold your house, we expect you to invest a significant part of the proceeds into Trelay.

People at Trelay

We have a good mix of people living here – different ages and genders; single people, couples, families, and people with all sorts of useful complementary skills and knowledge, including backgrounds in music, environmental consultancy, conservation, growing, building, engineering, healthcare, counselling, housing, food production, design, finance, teaching.

Here is a list of Trelay residents indicating the decade of their age.

| | | |
|-------------|------------|-----------|
| 30s Dave | 70s Roger | 40s Nico |
| 30s Johno | 70s Margot | 40s Vicky |
| 50s Graham | 30s Dave | 4 River |
| 40s Rachel | 30s Ella | 60s Kathy |
| 5 Deryn Rae | 6 Arthur | 60s Sally |
| 10 Hayden | 7 Stanley | 50s Paul |
| 30s Sophie | 2 Wren | 40s Katy |
| 30s Danny | 50s Rachel | 5 Olivia |
| 10 Ivy | 18 Luther | 50s Lee |
| 7 Poppy | 50s Dave | 40s Tor |
| 4 Lily | 50s Zane | 50s Kate |
| | 50s Katy | |

And finally....

If you want to proceed and explore the idea further:

Please email us around 500 words about yourself / yourselves to interest@trelay.org

*Your background & who you are

*Finances: capital available for deposit, and sources of income

*How you think Trelay would benefit you and

*How you think you would benefit Trelay.