

Build a low cost home in the Ecovillage with Dominic Stevens

Want to keep your mortgage debt to a minimum? Want substantially lower energy bills? You can have both these and more by joining forces with other self-builders and work with a team of professionals and volunteers to build yourself a low cost home in the Cloughjordan ecovillage.

If you've always wanted to build your own low-cost home but found it too daunting to go it alone, think again. The Ecovillage and architect Dominic Stevens have come up with an exciting plan to make it possible. Next year, Dominic will be leading the construction of a row of terrace houses. What makes this different is that all the site-owners in the terrace will belong to a house-building cooperative. In this way they can combine the benefits of a community build - help from friends, neighbours and volunteers - with the expertise of a professional project management team.



About Dominic Stevens



Dominic Stevens built his own one-bedroom house in 50 working days for a total cost of €25k. He did it to demonstrate that it is possible to build a comfortable, modern home with help from friends, family and neighbours and without the need to take out a massive mortgage.

"[In] the vernacular tradition ... people build their own house, not with help from the bank, rather with the help of their neighbours. The by-product of house production is an interdependent community, instead of lifelong debt to the bank. ... My project aims to remind people of these alternatives and seeks to show that people can put the power in society back with themselves and their communities."

You can read more about the project at:
www.irishvernacular.com

About the Ecovillage cooperative build

Dominic will be leading the design and construction team to build a terrace of three houses in the Ecovillage. The design and construction plan will likely involve:

- the self-builders working with Dominic to design their homes
- the employment of a carpenter/foreman and quantity surveyor to work with the architect and self builders
- help from friends, family and the wider ecovillage community at key stages
- help from other volunteers organised through the ecovillage community

Do you have what it takes?

You do if you have:

- enthusiasm and a willingness to work closely and cooperatively within a team
- a need for a modest sized house of no more than 2 bedrooms
- finance available of at least €120k – 70k to cover site and infrastructure costs, council charges etc and up to 50,000 euro for house construction

You don't need:

- a strong physique
- construction experience

What type of cooperative model is being used?

This is yet to be fully decided, but it will be some form of building cooperative. In this type of cooperative individuals or families work together to directly construct their own homes in a cooperative fashion. The site owners own their own home outright.

What's the benefit of being part of a building cooperative?

A far cheaper house. Labour generally makes up two-thirds of the cost of a new build. You can make huge savings by substituting expensive paid labour with the far cheaper - or even free - input of yourself, your friends, family and neighbours. And you can save even more by bulk buying materials with others, and by sharing a project manager, carpenter, etc.

What's the history of building cooperatives?

In Ireland its quite patchy. In the past, it was common for communities to come together to build a settlement of homes, but that tradition has been largely lost. For an example of how it can work in modern times, we can look to the system established by Walter Segal in the UK. The Walter Segal Self Build Trust describes the self-build system and philosophy thus:

"Segal system of quickly-built, timber-framed dwellings which are environmentally friendly, and seem to generate friendship among the self build groups that have succeeded in housing themselves this way. The attraction increases when we learn that they include men and women with every kind of background, and they often say that the experience changed their lives."

<http://www.segalselfbuild.co.uk/home.html>

Do you need to have construction experience to be part of the co-op?

No. The co-op will be employing professionals where necessary and using volunteers, friends and family to help with the unskilled labour. Co-op members will be expected to work on the house in any number of ways - providing labour, facilitating volunteers, helping with admin, etc.

How much money do you need to be part of this co-op?

All site costs, infrastructure services, connection to the district heating system, council taxes and other related charges come to just over €70,000. This figure includes a 40% reduction on the price of sites involved in the co-op build. The construction cost will be determined by a number of factors, but the aim is to keep it as low as possible. A figure of €50,000 is a good yardstick, but this figure, as with any other house build project, will depend on the level, type and expense of finish. This means co-op members will need funds or a mortgage amounting to approximately €120,000.

When will house construction begin?

There are a number of things to do before construction begins. The co-op members will need to work with Dominic to design their homes, apply for planning, begin construction drawings and plan the build process. Depending on how quickly this goes, the co-op should be ready to build between Autumn 2012 and Spring 2013.

How do I become part of this co-op?

Sign up to become a member of Sustainable Projects Ireland, agree to the general principles of the co-op and pay a non-returnable deposit on your chosen site.



If you are interested in finding out more, contact Dave: sales@thevillage.ie or call 0505-42833 | www.thevillage.ie

Find out more about the ecovillage at www.thevillage.ie