

## ENCOURAGING WORDS

Peter Bursky

### “Actualising the Fundamental Point”

*As all things are buddha-dharma, there are delusion, realization, practice, birth and death, buddhas and sentient beings. As myriad things are without an abiding self, there is no delusion, no realization, no buddha, no sentient beings, no birth and death. The buddha way, in essence, is leaping clear of abundance and lack; thus there are birth and death, delusion and realization, sentient beings and buddhas. Yet in attachment blossoms fall, and in aversion weeds spread.*<sup>1</sup>

This paragraph comes from the “Genjōkōan”, a letter written by Master Dōgen to one of his lay followers and which forms the opening chapter of his great collection of teachings titled “Shōbōgenzō”, or “Treasury of the True Dharma Eye”.

The Genjōkōan text presents a very clear outline of what the buddha way is all about, even within this first paragraph. As practitioners, we need to get an understanding of that conceptually and understand the philosophy that Dōgen is presenting us with (also known as ‘right view’), but more importantly we need to understand Dōgen’s mind so that these words, through practice, mirror our own experience.

“Genjōkōan ” is often translated as “Actualising the Fundamental Point”. It has the sense of directly experiencing right at this moment things as they are. “Gen” means manifest, present moment, right now, “jo” has a sense of completion or accomplishment and “koan” means an official document. The official document here is reality itself, also known as Dharma in Buddhism. Dōgen presents us with a way to actualise that “official document” of the way things truly are.

*As all things are buddha-dharma, there are delusion, realization, practice, birth and death, buddhas and sentient beings.*

Buddha-dharma here means the entire universe as it is right now. More importantly it means your entire phenomenal experience. Within your experience are moments of delusion, realisation, birth, death, zazen, tea bowls, tv’s, etc. Conceptually we might say that “if everything is Buddha then all things have this essential, dharma nature, even a tea bowl”. But actually, implicit in Dōgen’s words is the realisation or experience that all things come forth full and complete in themselves. Within that realisation we are free to acknowledge the myriad things as they appear to be and there is no doubt in our experience.

*As myriad things are without an abiding self, there is no delusion, no realization, no buddhas, no sentient beings, no birth and no death.*

Now Dōgen sweeps everything away and presents us with the empty one world. Again we might say that if there is no inherent self-nature anywhere to be found, then how can there be anything at all we can fixedly call realisation, or delusion, or sentient being, or tea bowl, or birth, or death. We can’t find them anywhere as inherently separate from anything else. But again, this has to be experienced. You have to be able to say “There’s not a single thing in the entire universe” and unwaveringly leave it at that.

*The buddha way, in essence, is leaping clear of abundance and lack; thus there are birth and death, delusion and realization, sentient beings and buddhas.*

Previously Dōgen presented two aspects of our experience/practice. Seeing clearly the true nature of form and emptiness is helpful if we wish to go beyond them, but if we stick to either or both, or any insight we might have for that matter, our practice becomes problematic.

Dōgen says the buddha way leaps clear of both of these. He urges us to continue our practice beyond realisation.

So how is the birth, death, delusion, realisation, sentient beings and buddhas of the first line different from this third line? Previously Dōgen said, “As all things are buddha-dharma, therefore we have these things coming forth as buddha-dharma”. That’s still a bit conceptual and abstract to a point, it’s not true zen. Now he says, “Going beyond abundance and lack, what’s it like?” Drop all those concepts about buddha-dharma, form and emptiness, what is your experience like right now? What remains?

Dōgen himself leaps clear here with simply, “Yet, in attachment blossoms fall, and in aversion weeds spread”. Yasutani roshi commented on this phrase saying these were Dōgen’s “live words” and that up to this point it had all been explanation<sup>2</sup>. I like that way of seeing it and it tempts me to leave it there on just the pure presentation of those words. But I also think Dōgen is pointing to the deeper matter of the heart and the endless suffering we vow to liberate. Our practice is not just for us. We vow to meet and respond to all forms of suffering with a clear open heart-mind. We learn to leap clear and never look back, and to not turn away from the suffering around us. We practise embracing the mess of the world, the falling blossoms and forever spreading weeds.

*Peter Bursky*

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1. Translation by Kazuaki Tanahashi & Robert Aitken

2. Yasutani, Hakuun. “Flowers Fall”, 1996, Shambala, pp 19-20

## Upcoming Events

### Women’s Retreat March 5-7

The retreat is open to all women who have meditation experience. It is held up at our Bush Zendo, Kodoji, and is a wonderful opportunity to practice together in nature. Social distancing will be required. \$25 per night.

Enquiries and bookings [jillsteverson@gmail.com](mailto:jillsteverson@gmail.com)

### Kodoji Samu March 27 - 28

Put in your diary now - 27 and 28 March, a weekend full of autumn at Kodoji on the Gorricks Run for our sesshin prep Samu - work practice.

All sorts of jobs and conversation. Soon the sangha will have to prepare for a fairly big maintenance plan for Kodoji especially painting all of weatherboard timbers.

Thoughts and ideas as to how best to tackle this will be duly encouraged over samu dinner.

### Autumn Sesshin at Kodoji, April 2-9

Friday April 2 to Friday April 9 (including the Good Friday and Easter Monday public holidays) with Subhana Barzaghi.

The Bodhisattva Peacemaker Vows are dedicated to cultivating oneness, healing, diversity, peace and harmony.

The three tenets of a Peacemaker are:

- to penetrate the unknown.
- to bear witness and honour our pain for the world.
- to cultivate compassionate action.

Our Earth household with the cycles of drought, raging devastating fires, followed by torrential rain is under threat. With extinctions occurring rapidly and loss of biodiversity fuelled by climate change, we can enact our vows and intentions to manifest wisdom and compassion to protect humans and non-humans alike.

Sesshin at Kodoji, in the silence and beauty of the valley and its surrounding cliffs provides a special off-grid intensive meditation experience. It is an opportunity to deepen into stillness, restore your inter-connection and place in the web

of life, to build resilience, to see with new eyes, to realise and practice the way of peace and embody this in our world.  
For an application form or more information: [stephenjcrump@gmail.com](mailto:stephenjcrump@gmail.com)

## Eco Dharma Training Course March 18 - May 13

8 week course on-line via Zoom

Thursday nights 6:30pm - 9pm



Are you concerned about Climate Change? Well here's a great way to learn more about the environment and yourself, the connections between all things, and how you can participate in charting a positive way forward.

Zen teachers Subhana Barzaghi and Mari Rhydwen are hosting an 8 week Eco-Dharma training course, on Thursday evenings in March, April and May.

They will be joined by experts in their fields of ecology, mindfulness, psychology, economics, buddhist ethics and philosophy and activism.

The course is open to everyone and you can join in from wherever you are, via Zoom.

Cost: \$250 waged, \$200 SZC members

Concession &/or student \$80

Further details available on the [SZC website](https://www.szc.org.au).

[szc.org.au/classes/eco-dharma-course](https://www.szc.org.au/classes/eco-dharma-course)

If you're interested in participating please contact Julie Robinson for further details: [julesandco@live.com.au](mailto:julesandco@live.com.au)

## Reports Rohatsu sesshin

The Rohatsu sesshin 2020 was conducted online/offline because of the restrictions introduced to fight the covid-19 pandemic.

The sesshin was led by Jane Andino, apprentice teacher and Peter Bursky, apprentice teacher. Jane and Peter offered dokusan and teishos on a daily basis. They also performed as zoom hosts as required. Jason Koh was the Ino. Diana Levy was the coordinator and also provided some refreshing Yoga sessions on a daily basis. Pablo Scodellaro was the Jiki.

The theme of the sesshin was the enlightenment experience of Shakyamuni Buddha which Zen communities around the world traditionally celebrate on 8 December, and it was an invitation for us to honour and realise for ourselves the Buddha's path of liberation. The sesshin started on Friday 4 December and ended on Tuesday December 8. The schedule included zazen, kinhin, sutra recitations, optional yoga, dokusan and teishos. A typical day would start at 5:30am and finish at 9pm. There were four blocks of zazen per day: early morning, late morning, afternoon and evening.

The different blocks were a mixture of online and offline. Outside kinhin and some zazen were done offline at set times. Dokusan was offered twice daily in one hour blocks and was conducted online.

There was a total of nineteen participants. We connected online using Zoom which worked really well, building on the experience gained during the winter sesshin. Additional online zazen blocks were included to the afternoon session, and this move was supported by participants.

One of the advantages of the Rohatsu sesshin is that participants can sign up for the four blocks of zazen according to their work/home schedule. It is an opportunity to integrate zazen into work/home practice, especially these days when

we often work from home. We were also able to support each other through the challenges of maintaining the spirit of sesshin when things got tough at home, either too much distraction or too much sameness. The times of sharing and discussion were especially deep and sincere.

Nothing can replace the Kodoji sesshin but, for those who can't get there because of health, work or family reasons, the online sesshin looks as though it will become a regular offering of the SZC.

*Pablo Scodellaro.*



## News from the Board

### SCHEDULE

After the Covid outbreak in December/January, the Board decided to meet again via Zoom. For the next couple of months we have decided to return to our sitting practice at the zendo on alternate Mondays and Wednesdays. Tuesday morning sitting via Zoom continues. On Thursday nights in February we will continue our Zoom sitting.

In March and April Subhana Barzagli and Mari Rhydwen will be conducting an 8 week Eco-Dharma training course in the Thursday night time slot, via Zoom. It will be a fascinating and informative course with contributions from experts in the field of Climate Change. Details are on our website.

Zazenkais will be at Annandale - please check the website for details.

There are restrictions on how many people are able to come to the zendo so it's essential to register and book in with [info@szc.org.au](mailto:info@szc.org.au). Please don't turn up unless you get a return confirmation for your booking.

As always, the upcoming events scheduled in February and March are dependent upon the Covid situation not escalating and advice from NSW Health Department.

Check 'What's On' or our website for up to date details: [szc.org.au/upcoming-events](https://szc.org.au/upcoming-events)

### KICKSTART YOUR PRACTICE

This initiative of having an early morning sit, three days a week via Zoom over December and January was very popular. We saw many newcomers logging on and finding their Zen Way, as well as old-timers enjoying the community of birds, cicadas and virtual humans. Thank you Stephen for your fabulous hosting.

### ANNANDALE RESIDENTS

Farewell to Kevin and welcome to Paul who moved into Annandale on Christmas day. It's great to see your smiling face on Zoom and at the zendo! We now have Ilona, Daniel and Paul looking after our Dharma home

### NEW MEMBERS

Welcome Emme, Rachel and Aeveen to the sangha! We look forward to sharing this wonderful practice with you.

## RECUPERATION

After a very busy 2020 Jane is taking a well-deserved break from teaching, till May. (*Ed: She will keep her regular Blue Mountains Zen and Thursday zoom meetings going.*) The Board would like to thank her for graciously taking up the challenges we had last year, doing much of the organisation and presentation for our online sesshins and stepping in whenever needed at other times. We wish her a restorative break.

## GOOGLE MAPS

Our new tech savvy Board member Joe, brought our attention to a common way people find our Centre – through Google Maps. So, over the last month or so we've been posting reviews and photos to let interested people know who we are. Please feel free to add your comments and pics too.

## BEQUESTS

After several enquiries from members, the Board has included a section about 'Bequests in your Will' on our website: [szc.org.au/membership](http://szc.org.au/membership)

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# Regular Notices

## Transition back to Annandale Zendo / Continuation of on-line meditation

*Please see the regular SZC email reminders for Zoom links, or email [info@szc.org.au](mailto:info@szc.org.au) for details.*

We are returning to a limited transition back to the Annandale zendo, with alternate weeks offering Monday or Wednesday meetings. This will be subject to review, depending on the easing (or not) of the COVID-19 restrictions, and our members' and teachers' circumstances.

If you wish to attend the Annandale zendo, **you must pre-register via [info@szc.org.au](mailto:info@szc.org.au)**, and you must comply with our COVID-19 conditions of entry which can be found on [www.szc.org.au/classes/zazen](http://www.szc.org.au/classes/zazen)

The Board is also committed to maintaining an on-line meditation program, with Thursdays being the regular weekly evening. As a trial, we have begun Zoom meetings on Thursdays.

### **Mondays**

7.00–7.25 Guided meditation  
7.25–7.30 Walking meditation  
7.30–7.45 Encouraging words  
7.45–8.15 Inquiry and sharing about practice  
8.15–8.30 Plenary and close with Great Vows

### **Tuesdays Mini morning meditation**

6.55–7.00am Join/welcome  
7.00–7.25am Meditation  
7.25–7.30am Great Vows

### **Wednesdays with Gilly Coote**

7.00–7.30 Meditation/walking  
7.30–8.00 Meditation/walking  
8.00–8.30 Discussion/Great Vows

### **Thursdays**

7.00–7.30 Meditation/walking  
7.30–8.00 Meditation/walking  
8.00–8.30 Discussion/Great Vows

### **The Blue Mountains Zen Group**

We will be meeting via Zoom on Sunday afternoons. All are welcome to join us for zazen with either a talk or Dharma Café. Please email Jane at [janeandino@yahoo.com.au](mailto:janeandino@yahoo.com.au) for more details.

### **Phone dokusan for members**

Subhana is offering dokusan to SZC members on Thursday evenings.

Gilly is also offering dokusan to members by appointment.

## Members of the Board



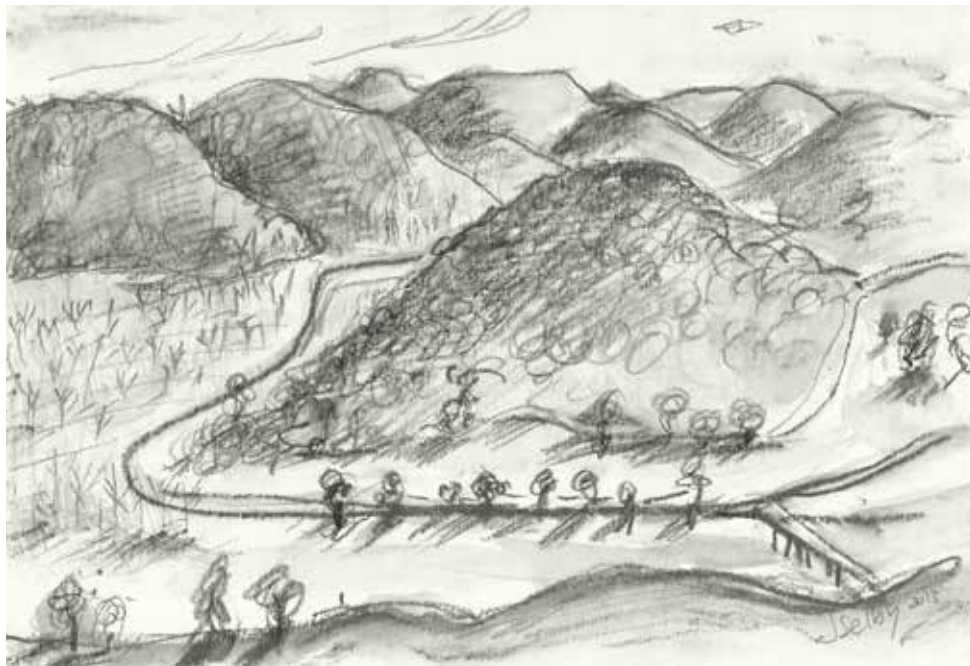
Kerry Stewart (Chairperson) [stewartkerry4@gmail.com](mailto:stewartkerry4@gmail.com); Stephen Crump (secretary); Jason Koh (treasurer); Helen Sanderson; Zoe Thurner, Julie Robinson, Pablo Scodellaro; Joe Gaebel.

**Newsletter Editor:** Janet Selby [janetselby@bigpond.com](mailto:janetselby@bigpond.com)

**SZC:** [info@szc.com.au](mailto:info@szc.com.au), [www.szc.org.au](http://www.szc.org.au)

## February 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	2	3 Annandale ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	4 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Peter	5	6
7	8 Annandale ZAZEN 7-9pm Peter	9 Board Meeting 6.30pm	10 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	11 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Jane	12	13
14 Annandale ZAZENKAI 10am Teisho Peter	15 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	16 Orientation	17 Annandale ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	18 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Peter	19	20
21	22 Annandale Dharma Cafe 7-9pm Peter	23	24 VIRTUAL Dharma Cafe 7-9pm Gillian	25 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Jane	26	27
28						



*Upper MacDonald Valley, the road to Kodoji. Drawing by Janet Selby*

## March 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	2	3 Annandale ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	4	5 Women's Retreat	6 Women's Retreat
7 Women's Retreat	8 Annandale ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	9 Board Meeting 6.30pm	10 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	11	12	13
14 Annandale ZAZENKAI 10am Teisho Will	15 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	16	17 Annandale ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	18 Eco Dharma Course	19	20
21	22 Annandale ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana	23 Orientation	24 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian	25 Eco Dharma Course	26	27 Kodoji SAMU
28 Kodoji SAMU	29 VIRTUAL ZAZEN 7-9pm Subhana Full Moon Ceremony <i>Not Stealing</i>	30	31 Annandale- ZAZEN 7-9pm Gillian Full Moon Ceremony <i>Not Stealing</i>			



*Upper MacDonald Valley, the road to Kodoji. Drawing by Janet Selby*



# Eco Dharma Training Course 2021

Eight Week Course  
On-line via Zoom

with Zen Teachers  
Subhana Barzaghi &  
Mari Rhydwen

Thursday nights  
6:30pm - 9pm

March 18, 25

April 1, 15, 22, 29

May 6, 13

Sydney Zen Centre

[www.szc.org.au](http://www.szc.org.au)



Zen Teachers Subhana Barzaghi & Mari Rhydwen will be joined by experts in the fields of ecology, mindfulness, psychology, economics, Buddhist ethics and activism to explore how we can participate in charting a positive way forward to address the current climate crisis.

The course is open to everyone and you can join in from wherever you are via Zoom.

The aims of the Eco-dharma training are:

- to honour our intent to protect the earth and all beings
- to create the space for reflecting on the difficult feelings in response to the destruction of our natural world
- to encourage open dialogue, reflective inquiry and embodied practices to support deep learning and collective action
- to increase our active engagement with the world by cultivating clarity, courage integrity and compassion
- to deepen our relationship with nature and promote life sustaining systems and culture
- to be guided by the Buddha Dharma in responding to this ecological emergency
- to support an eco-dharma community

**Cost:** \$250 waged, \$200 SZC member  
Concession &/or student \$80

For inquiry and registration contact Julie Robinson  
Email: [julesandco@live.com.au](mailto:julesandco@live.com.au)

Sydney Zen Centre Bank details:  
BSB 062-182 Account 1013 7103

Please tag payment with your name and the letters "ED" then email a copy of your bank transfer receipt confirmation to Julie Robinson.

*Julie Robinson* [julesandco@live.com.au](mailto:julesandco@live.com.au)



## Course Outline

Each session will also include discussion and reflective practices.

### Week 1: March 18 What is Eco Dharma?

**Presenters: Subhana Barzaghi, Dr. Mari Rhydwen**

**Mari Rhydwen** is a Zen Roshi and teacher for the Zen Group of Western Australia, writer and climate activist. Mari will introduce the concept of eco-dharma and explore the relationship between Buddhist practices, meditation, environmental issues and activism. We will discuss how Buddhist practices can guide us in facing an ecological crisis that threatens all life on earth. **Subhana Barzaghi** is a Zen Roshi, Insight Dharma teacher, Director of the Insight Meditation Institute and climate activist. Subhana will introduce Joanna Macy's work from 'Active Hope' which outlines a spiral of the practices that reconnect: coming from gratitude, honouring our pain for the world, seeing with new eyes and going forth with active hope, wise and compassionate action.

### Week 2: March 25 A Scientific Update

**A scientific update on the global ecological crisis and how climate change is affecting Australia**

**Presenter: Dr. Rosalie Chapple** is an environmental scientist who has worked in conservation for 30 years. Rosalie teaches in UNSW Masters of Environmental Management Program & is Director of World Heritage Institute in the Blue Mountains. This session will be an opportunity to educate and update ourselves about the current climate change situation, its impact, projections, the status of the ecological crisis in Australia and the importance of Indigenous knowledge systems in recovery and protection of Country.

### Week 3: April 1 Honouring our pain for the world

**Presenters: Subhana Barzaghi & Dr. Sally Gillespie**

**Sally Gillespie** did her Ph.D. research on the psychological effects of climate change and her latest acclaimed book is called Climate Crisis & Consciousness. Sally will speak about the range of psychological and emotional responses to climate change and ecological collapse and how we can develop more resilience. Developing awareness of ecological threats and destructions can stir both eco-anxiety and grief. The more we talk about all of this, the more resilient we can be in our engagement and find ways to re-imagining ourselves in our world.

**Subhana Barzaghi** will then provide a safe harbour to explore ways to manage; eco-anxiety, despair, anger, fear and grief through dharma teachings, rituals, mindfulness and creative ways to express our grief for the world.

### Week 4: April 15 Seeing with new eyes and deep listening

**Presenters: Subhana Barzaghi & Dr. Mari Rhydwen**

**Subhana Barzaghi** will share practices that open us to the insight of interconnectedness and inter-being to cultivate a compassionate response to suffering. The role of mindfulness in building resilience, renewal, inspiration, nourishment and regenerative work.

**Mari Rhydwen** In an age of constant chatter and argument via social media, listening deeply is a practice encouraged in many of the responses to our current situation. Mari will speak about Aboriginal practices such as deep listening (*Dadirri*) to Bohmian and Insight dialogue that offer ways to communicate that build and support community.

## **Week 5 - April 22** Principles of bearing witness & compassionate action

**Presenters: Subhana Barzagli, Mari Rhydwen, Carol Perry & Gerard Mazza**

**Subhana Bazarghi** will outline the principles of non-violent action and the 3 Tenets of the Zen Peacemaker Order; not knowing, bearing witness and compassionate action.

**Carol Perry** is an Insight dharma teacher and social environmental activist who has been involved in a number of successful Northern Rivers environmental campaigns. Carol will outline the 4 roles of the social activist and the importance of the positive rebel.

**Mari Rhydwen and Gerard Mazza** will explore how activism can be made inclusive for everyone through sharing their stories about Contemplative Rebels and other actions.

## **Week 6: April 29** Addressing big picture issues

**Decarbonising the Economy: What would it take to achieve a rapid decarbonization of the global economy?**

**Presenters: Sue Holmes & Professor Neil Gunningham**

**Sue Holmes** is an economist who worked for the Australian Productivity Commission, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and active member of Get Up.

**Professor Neil Gunningham** is a social scientist at the ANU who has researched and written widely concerning climate change policy and environmental activism.

In addition to personal actions, the earth needs governments to implement ambitious policies if a climate catastrophe is to be avoided. Only Governments are able to devise policies so that everyone and every business, not just the committed reduce their carbon emissions. Currently, Government and businesses are not doing enough. The reasons for this will be explored along with ways to push Governments and businesses to take action. They will outline the types of economic and regulatory policy options Governments could take.

## **Week 7: May 6** Low carbon living and deep adaptation to climate change

**Presenters: Professor Neil Gunningham & Professor John Merson**

This session will explore what effective actions you might want to take to avert a climate catastrophe.

**John Merson** is one of the founding Directors of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute and has been a consultant to UNESCO, APEC, IUCN and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs. John will outline practical actions that individuals, households and community can take for low carbon living. We will discuss the moral values and positive benefits of engaged action.

**Neil Gunningham** will discuss principles of 'Deep Adaptation' building "resilience", "relinquishing" climate risky practices "restoring" older values; and "reconciliation" which is all about living in harmony and peace.

We will look at actions in terms of whether they are personal, community-based or political and ask what are you passionate about? How can you best contribute to a low carbon revolution?

## **Week 8: May 13** Going forth with mindful communication and wise action

**Presenters: Carol Perry, Mari Rhydwen & Sage Ellis**

**Carol Perry** is an Insight meditation teacher and an experienced communication expert. She will offer a seminar on wise speech, communicating mindfully, and developing empathy in conflict and difficult situations. She will outline principles of how to have open dialogues with different stakeholders who have different views.

**Mari Rhydwen and Sage Ellis** will talk about building and maintaining community. In times of existential threat, community is essential. How do we develop ways to provide and receive ongoing support and what support is already available in our area/s via networking and local action groups including the Anthropocene Transition Network and Extinction Rebellion?