

The Lavender Project



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The Lavender Project = a community led way to discuss the sustainability of Woodend Barn a rural arts centre in NE Scotland.

The Lavender Project is a collaboration between artist Helen Smith, Tony Brown, Nicola Chambury, Hilary Duncan Fiona Hope, Mark Hope and Genevieve Jones. Extracts from www.helensmith.co.uk The possibility of Lavender as a subject for discussing the sustainability and specifically the sustainability of Woodend Barn began as a conversation in the bar on the evening of Fiona's birthday, (November 2012) after a Woodend Barn Music Society event. This was the first time I had heard anyone mention Banchory Lavender. Tony and Christina were telling a small circle of friends about how they had recently heard that it grew commercially in fields that could be seen from the North Deeside Road. I seem to remember a pause in the conversation in which maybe we all imagined the site and smell of fields of lavender. The motivation for such a project originally came from two sources: my doctoral research brief: "how can these processes of creativity (artistic and organizational) best address the pressing social and economic issues of sustainability..." (CDA August 2011). And another social moment during the interval of a film when I was introduced to Genevieve who insisted that it would be good for Woodend Barn "To introduce the ideas and concepts that are part of ecological art to a wider audience and" to have an event that is fun and thought provoking and not too worthy" (email G.Jones to F.Hope & H.Smith. Feb 2012). The Lavender Project developed from these motivations and took hold in these shared moments in the social life of the organization. During the course of our work together we discovered how Tim Upson and Susyn Andrews in their taxonomy of "The Genus Lavandula" (2004) identify a cultivar of Lavender, developed commercially by Chemist, Andrew (Drewie) Inkster, that is the most northerly commercially grown lavender and is specific to Banchory. Once this subject was agreed as a good metaphor, rich with stories, for discussing sustainability the group met regularly to uncover the reasons why lavender thrived ecologically and commercially on Deeside from 1946 until it ceased trading in 1989. This knowledge forms the basis of our ongoing conversations about sustainability and was presented as a first phase of the project as a community exhibition at Woodend Barn in 2013.

