

SWEDEN

Local development

Location
Röstånga

Programming period
2014 – 2020

Priority
P6 – Social inclusion & local
development

Measure
M19 – LEADER/CLLD

Funding (EUR)
Total budget 223 927
EAFRD 150 031
National/Regional 73 896

Project duration
2016 – 2019

Project promoter
Röstånga ekoby ekonomiska
förening

Contact
info@rekobyn.se

Website
www.rekobyn.se/

Revitalising a declining rural community by developing a sustainable ecovillage through learning and networking.

Summary

After years of demographic and economic decline in the small community of Röstånga, several development projects were realised, e.g. building a bike track, setting up a development agency and starting a local bus service. These investments attracted people to the area as a place to live and work. However, there was limited housing available. Hence, the decision was made to invest in the construction of a sustainable ecovillage. This effort required establishing a network for cooperation among multiple actors, setting up a promotional campaign for attracting newcomers, learning new technical skills and maintaining good communication with local people.



Results

An ecovillage was established with approximately 30 new households.

New people are moving to Röstånga and the ecovillage will create possibilities for people to work locally and create employment.

The ecovillage was designed in a way that minimises its ecological footprint. Sustainable sources for energy and heat are used. Food production is integrated with the new housing. Food waste is used for heating and the by-product is applied to the soil, so the nutrients are cycled back into the ecosystem. A greenhouse was built with an aquaponics system where fish are raised and vegetables and mushrooms are also produced.

The project created new forums for sustainable development and local development. The knowledge gathered during the project is available to anyone interested and would be transferable to other rural areas.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ In projects that rely on the involvement of multiple stakeholders to acquire and share knowledge and to cooperate, it is essential to invest in networking.

Context

After years of people moving away and local services closing down in Röstånga, the municipality had just 839 inhabitants in 2010. Many elderly people wanted to sell their houses and move to smaller households within the community and only a few locals thought construction of new houses was necessary. Röstånga also needed more residents so that the school and local services could function.

Over the course of the last decade, numerous development projects were realised, such as building a bike track, running a community bus and a community development company. New networks started to be created and new small companies emerged. This created a feeling of “things happening” that reached people outside of Röstånga, and new people wanted to move there. Sadly, that was not possible due to a shortage of housing. In order to address this need, the project owner cooperated with Svalöv municipality and an architectural enterprise, FOJAB, to explore the possibility of establishing an ecovillage. A member of the former Röstånga Ekoby project had spent many hours researching how sustainable housing could be built in rural areas.

Objectives

The idea behind the project was to create a new, alternative and thriving living environment in Röstånga.

Activities

The project involved designing a detailed development plan, learning about technical aspects of the project, conducting a marketing campaign and ensuring local support.

Designing a development plan: A detailed development plan was prepared for building the ecovillage. Before developing the plan, however, some pre-stage work was conducted. This involved an analysis of the current situation and setting the vision for the future. They sought help with this activity from the architectural enterprise FUJAB. This step also required the cooperation of the municipality.

Learning: One of the objectives was to gain knowledge that could be used during and after the project on the following topics: organisation and decision-making processes, permaculture, construction engineering, water and sewage, housing conditions, local economy and

energy. Knowledge in these diverse fields was acquired through study circles, lectures and excursions. A bank of knowledge was established on the project’s website, which is now open to anyone.

Marketing: The project and the ecovillage were promoted online and through publications. The promotional campaign was aimed at finding people who would want to move to Röstånga and the ecovillage as well as people who would simply want to help out.

Ensuring local support: In order for the project to be effective, it was necessary to gain support among the local people. Therefore, several informational meetings were held. Local people received updates on how the project was going. They could make suggestions and give feedback. Apart from physical meetings, the project used its website and Facebook page to share information on the process and to receive comments from people involved in as well as external to the project.

Main results

An ecovillage was established with approximately 30 new households.

New people are moving to Röstånga and the ecovillage will create new employment opportunities.

The ecovillage was designed to minimise its ecological footprint. Sustainable sources for energy and heat are used. Food production is integrated with the new housing. Food waste is used for heating and the by-product is reapplied to the soil, so the nutrients are cycled back into the ecosystem. A greenhouse was built with an aquaponics system so that vegetables and mushrooms are produced in conjunction with fish.

The project created new forums for sustainable development and local development. The knowledge gathered during the project has been made available to anyone who is interested and would be transferable to other rural areas.

Key lessons

Several different stakeholders were involved, including Ecotopia (Centre for Sustainable Construction and Permaculture), FUJAB, Baskemölla Ecovillage, Röstånga Together, Fridhems Folkhögskola and the municipality of Svalöv. The basic idea of the project was to acquire and share knowledge and cooperate with different actors. This is why networking was essential.

Additional sources of information

www.facebook.com/groups/rekoby/