

## **The ECA July 2014 Meeting: a report by Nandavajra (of the ECA Development Team)**

The summer meeting of the Triratna European Chairs Assembly (the 'ECA') took place at Adhithana from 21<sup>st</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> July, where we enjoyed the warm hospitality of the Adhithana community and team along with glorious weather. Thirty five UK, Ireland and mainland Europe Chairs were joined by Vajrajyoti and Ratnavyuha, as guests, members of the Development Team and, for 3 days, Dhammarati, Padmasuri, Sanghadevi, Parami, and Kamalashila, as representatives of the College of Public Preceptors and Lokeshvara as International Order Convenor. It was a very harmonious and stimulating meeting exploring a wide range of topics – an example of the Triratna Order functioning at it best.

As usual the event began with small group where chairs reported-in sharing, with their peers, how they and their Centres are doing. This was followed by a day devoted to meditation practice, led by Jnanavaca. Throughout the week shrine room activities ably led by Amalamati, Satyapada and Suryamati. Later in the meeting there was a review of 2014 International Retreat and the 2014 Buddhist Action Month (BAM), both of which were considered successful and the meeting agreed to promote BAM in 2015 and to run another International retreat in 2016. Amalaketu delivered a presentation on how to become a certificated sustainable Centre as a practical response to environmental issues, Singhamati reported back on inspiring developments with Young Buddhist projects and Shantiprabha visited the meeting to talk about the work of the Abhayaratna Trust. Vajragupta joined the meeting with a proposal about future 'Urban Retreats' and the meeting agreed to run an Urban retreat in 2015 in partnership with the Adhithana team. Towards the end of the meeting the formal AGM and business meeting of the Triratna Chairs Assembly took place with the election of Trustees and Executive members for the coming year, the presentation of the annual report and the agreement of the Development Fund budget for 2015.

Presentations from the Sheffield and North London Buddhist Centres provided inspiration and lighter moments (including an appearance from Visuddhimati's dragon) and a final evening bought the pleasure of listening to Jnanadhara and Yashodeva on guitar and vocals followed by a closing ritual and mantra chanting around a very impressive bonfire.

### **Collaboration, Strategic Vision and fundraising**

In January of this year the ECA initiated the launch of a major fundraising campaign to resource new developments in the Triratna Community. However it soon became apparent that much more groundwork and consultation was needed before the campaign could be taken forward and a number of important questions and issues were highlighted. These were explored over three days of the ECA meeting in which the chairs were joined by the representatives of the Public Preceptors College and International Order Convenors. Six sessions of presentations and discussion explored:

1. The history of the '3 strands model' (College, Order and movement) and it's helpfulness and limitations
2. The dynamic and interconnected nature of our community and the need for collaboration, synergy and unity
3. How the College with its principle role of overseeing Ordination and training in Bhante's system of practice is integral to all aspects of Triratna Community – it is part of the structure, not a separate project
4. Beginning to develop a strategic vision for the Triratna Community in Europe with collaboration between the College, ECA and Order

5. The formation of a 'working group', with representation from the PPC and ECA, and ECA Development Team, to help develop a strategic vision and priorities in a collaborative manner
6. A fundraising process, initially focussing on the immediate needs of the ECA Development Fund and the funding needs of the College, over the next 18 months, and in due course developing into a major fundraising campaign

The three days bringing together the ECA and College involved some very rich and broad-ranging discussion and perhaps heralded a significant development for the Triratna Community with a deeper appreciation of our interconnected nature and fostering a stronger spirit of collaboration. There was a strong sense of unity.

Notes on all the discussion and presentations and minutes of the formal meetings can be viewed at the ECA page at [thebuddhistcentre.com](http://thebuddhistcentre.com) or please contact Nandavajra at [nandavajra@triratnadevelopment.org](mailto:nandavajra@triratnadevelopment.org)