

In January some 50 Chairs, Directors and other representatives of Triratna Buddhist Centres and other ventures came together at Adhithana for the Winter ECA meeting.



On the first evening we were introduced to two new Chairs (Dhammapitika from Metta Vihara and Amaragita from Buddhafield) and the new director of Windhorse Publications (Dhammamegha) as well as to the new representatives for Arnhem (Sangharati) and Cambridge (Vidyasakhi).

Amongst other things short talks were given on how to cultivate Vision at a Centre by Aryanita (Paris), Sanghanistha (Padmaloka) and Saddhanandi (Adhithana) and Dharmadeva gave a presentation on the Essen Centre. To make sure the meeting was held within the context of the wider mandala of uselessness there was a cultural/fun evening (hosted by Jnanadhara) with poetry-readings, song and piano music. Maitridevi led us through a practice morning on metta including the plants and tree-spirits at Adhithana. A morning was spent with members of the College, during which we said goodbye to Saddhaloka and welcomed Ratnadharini who filled us in on her thoughts on being the new Chair of the College. We also said goodbye to Priyananda who has handed on his directorship of Windhorse Publications to Dhammamegha.



The main theme for the event was to come to an agreement on priorities for the next 5 years. Rather than using the business language of strategic priorities, we talked in terms of co-creating a vision and a mandala, where what is most vital to us is placed at the centre, with other important aspirations arranged around it. The meeting was working towards a mandala of actionable, measurable priorities for the years to come.

To this end, after having met up in the usual homegroups, we split up into different groupings (by size of Centre). We started with some 18 topics which were voted upon so as to come to a final list. There was a chance to advocate for topics and 10 Chairs made good use of this.

The **final list of priorities** is as follows:

- ❖ Young people
- ❖ Diversity
- ❖ Review ECA/DT/Triratna int'l structures (relationship ECA has with other bodies)
- ❖ Growth & Contexts for intensity
- ❖ Safeguarding
- ❖ Dharmic engagement with social and ecological issues
- ❖ Training, support, resources.

Other topics are part of the **wider mandala** surrounding this key-list and will regularly be reviewed at ECA meetings (for some of them other bodies will be taking a lead):

- ❖ Money
- ❖ Communications
- ❖ Training in the Path of Responsibility
- ❖ Difficult Conversations
- ❖ Deepening Pathway for those not pursuing ordination
- ❖ Process of Evaluation
- ❖ Translations
- ❖ Meditation + Dharma teaching
- ❖ Ethics

Various working groups made a start to look at the final priorities as well as at some from the wider mandala. They were asked to outline actionable, tangible steps that were specific, achievable and measurable.

As always there was a 'business' meeting and evaluation, an induction session for new members, a meeting of Chairs from mainland Europe and a session on safeguarding with Munisha and Amaladipa. Morning meditations were led by Saddhanandi and pujas, like the Five Buddha Mandala Puja, were led on some of the evenings by Vajragupta.

The meeting also said goodbye to Nandavajra in his capacity as director of the Development Team. From the many rejoicings at the end of the meeting it was clear that Nandavajra has been very much appreciated for all the work he has done for the meeting as well as for who he is.

It was a very intense and also enjoyable meeting!

These were some of the highlights as mentioned by various Chairs in a pop-up round towards the end as well as in the evaluation:

- ❖ Masterclass in facilitation!
- ❖ ... having the generosity to allow people to disagree helped come to consensus
- ❖ Well held and with humour
- ❖ The 'what' was a bit much but very much enjoyed the 'how'
- ❖ Positive atmosphere, engagement from members
- ❖ How broad people's perspective is
- ❖ Recognising the importance of diversity to our community
- ❖ All the work that went in from Exec + Dev team to make this such a positive event
- ❖ Watching Ratnadharini being so excited by what she saw at the ECA, how dynamic the decision-making processes are
- ❖ Watching Suryagupta at work on a mastery level of decision-making (persistence, patience, clarity, 'a gem', positivity, humour)
- ❖ Meeting with friends, making new connections; hearing about the ups/downs of the life of a Chair from many different perspectives
- ❖ Able to hold different ideas but come to consensus; experiencing the Order working together
- ❖ **Exec** going the extra mile; process of selecting priorities, beautifully led; feeling held during difficult processes; positive, inclusive, productive; many voices heard; lively debates



- ❖ An emergent process that revealed the potency of engaging within a field of committed practitioners
- ❖ Spontaneous appreciation of each other; everyone's openness, friendliness, commitment; positive atmosphere; humour
- ❖ Sharing in an experience of kalyana mitrata; clear and vivid life of the Order Sangha
- ❖ Lots of confidence in the future direction of this meeting (seeing people stepping into vacated roles of responsibility within ECA/Exec)
- ❖ There was 'something of the Bodhicitta' there ...