



Auroville International
UNITED KINGDOM

Funding Auroville

Auroville – what it needs

Many people have different opinions about what Auroville needs. For example, more young people, more consciousness and more devotion to The Mother.

But others argue that Auroville needs hundreds of millions of pounds for many projects. For example to buy land, to build more housing, to create more farms, to construct a unified water, and a unified transportation system and for many more projects.

It is also argued that although Auroville generates some funds from commercial activities, the vast majority of this project money needs to come from outside Auroville.

Where will this outside money come from?

Auroville currently receives money from many sources - private donations, grants from organisations, institutions, many overseas government agencies, and from the Indian government

Auroville also receives donations from Indian companies through the Corporate Social Responsibility system.

What is the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) system?

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), is also called corporate sustainability, sustainable business, corporate conscience, corporate citizenship, conscious capitalism, or responsible business. It is generally large companies donating money for worthy causes. India is the first country in the world to make CSR mandatory.



Private land that Auroville Funding hopes to buy to extend an Auroville forest area

Companies in India with a net profit of more than Rs 5 crores, approximately £600,000, are mandated by the government to spend a minimum of two percent of their average net profits on social causes in the country.

CSR and Auroville

Auroville has benefitted from CSR in the past. For example, part of the Crown Road development was funded by CSR. In the future, an experimental section of the Matrimandir lake will be part funded by CSR.

Funding Auroville Group

There is a new group in Auroville called 'Funding Auroville' which is going to try to obtain as much funding as possible from the Corporate Social Responsibility system and from other organisations with large budgets for worthy causes.

However, before approaching any organisation for funds for any project, each project needs to be properly presented. Project writing is not easy and needs time and energy. Many Aurovilians are working flat out and have no experience in project writing, so need help with this work.

A long time visitor, Ken Vanosky from the USA, has therefore given a project writing seminar to help these Aurovilians with worthy projects, to write them so they are presentable to large organisations with CSR funds.

CSR in Britain – How you can help?

Although there is no mandatory CSR system in Britain, there are many companies and organisations with similar budgets for worthy causes. It is hoped that the Funding Auroville Group can approach some of these groups. Unfortunately, there are many other organisations seeking funds for their causes.

So, if anyone knows of a person who is involved in these budgets and would be open to helping Auroville financially, then please contact John Mulrey: john@aviuk.org – 01296 415685

As Ken said "we are just looking for help getting a foot in the door, perhaps just an introduction, then we would take over".



Sadhana Forest entrance

Sadhana Forest

'They' all said

'They' all said, in 2014 before my visit to Auroville, that I must visit Sadhana Forest. People who had been there were obviously impressed by what they had seen and experienced. For various reasons I did not go, but on my return home 'they' were all incredulous that I had not visited Sadhana Forest. It was almost a crime that I had not gone to visit. Part of me thought what is the big deal, it is just a forest area with some volunteers.

Five years later in 2019, I am back in Auroville and a visit is in my schedule. Aviram the founder of Sadhana Forest and his wife Yorit had kindly invited me for lunch.

I wanted to go to see where the donations AVI UK had received were being spent. Also, if AVI UK had some more exhibitions at universities, I wanted to be able to explain to potential volunteers what went on at Sadhana Forest.

But a bit of me wanted to get 'they' off my back.

The journey

The day before my planned visit I looked at the map and... where is it?

Eventually I found it, miles away from most Auroville places, that would need a long cycle ride.

I set off, and sometime later. I am cycling a long way off the beaten

track, not sure if I am on the right road. Dogs from the local village seem to know I am a stranger, and run menacingly at me and bark loudly as I go past.

A motorbike rider seems to sense my uncertainty and tells me Sadhana Forest is straight on. I keep going for a long time more and finally tired, hot and sweaty I arrive at my destination.

Part of me thinks this place better be worth at least some of this hassle.

The visit - Luke

I look up and see this massive yet lovely keet hut. I feel like I am going back in time to the Auroville of the 1980s. I am asked to wait at the back of the hut and I am immediately

impressed by the relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

After a short time, Luke introduces himself and tells me Aviram is busy at the moment and he has been asked to show me around.

It is clear to me within a few minutes, this young man is totally and utterly in love with the aims behind Sadhana Forest. He explains that he was a B&Q service manager who quit his job to go to Sadhana Forest and is now a long-term volunteer.

He explains the work in the forest which is the routine in the morning, the quiet time before lunch, the shared lunch schedule, the free time in the afternoon and the community atmosphere. He goes on to tell me with quiet passion about the recycling and how they are totally off the grid.

I knew Sadhana Forest was also involved in Haiti, and in conversation Luke says he was one of the volunteers who were chosen to go there. This is not a surprise to me and clearly Aviram had chosen well. I strongly sense Luke's life has been transformed. I am beginning to think 'they' might have a point about this place.

The visit - Aviram

Aviram and I talk over the communal vegan lunch. He emphasises all the points Luke talked about. In addition, he tells me that the volunteers have to join in the general sadhana. I am not sure what that means, but Aviram tells me that if any volunteer is caught drinking in Pondicherry they are asked to leave. So obviously this is a place for learning and experience, not a place to hang out for a few months and occasionally party.

Later he tells me that from living in 2003 in a scrap bullock cart with a roof made of coconut leaves,

and arid land of red laterite and clay, they now have 70 acres of Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest and in 2018 over 1000 volunteers came through Sadhana Forest.

We go on a tour through the beautiful forest and Aviram explains how they have branched out to Haiti and Kenya. But not only that, they are building a local tea house where the volunteers and the people from the local villages can mix.

In all activities care of water is also a very important message in Sadhana Forest. Everything is done to save water. For example in the kitchen a hand pump is used rather than a tap. This reduces waste and makes everyone aware of the water they use.

In addition, they look after cows that have been kept by Auroville farms and now have come to the end of their working life.

Post visit reflection

I am very grateful for all the hospitality. But I cycle away thinking that this place gives young people a taste of a different lifestyle, makes them experience living closer to the

land and be in a non-competitive and supportive community, and generally educates them to respect the environment, water, animals and people from different cultures. This experience would stay with these young people for ever, and is a great example of an Aurovillian educational project.

I am also trying to choose the adjective I will put in the email to my family to describe Sadhana Forest, and decide on 'wonderful'. But at the same time, I know the dogs are barking, but they are not bothering me as there is a little voice spinning in my head that says 'they' were right.

If you wish to contribute to this wonderful educational program, which helps individuals and the environment, please contact John Mulrey:

john@aviuk.org – 01296 415685



Hand washing area at Sadhana Forest

Aikiyam School

Aikiyam is a day-school for around 240 children, with classes which range from pre-kindergarten to the eighth grade. All tuition, educational supplies, nutritious snacks and mid-day meals are provided for very low fees. The school has affiliation from India's Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and is entitled to issue a recognised school leaving certificate. CBSE promotes creative education at all levels through the application of learning by doing.

AVI UK has continued its support of the activities of Aikiyam School in Auroville, with funds being raised for the project from private donations.

We work closely with the school Support Group, taking an active part in supporting both the running and future development of the school. The school has continued to improve its campus, updating its facilities.

Success stories

Aikiyam School has always been a popular choice with long term volunteers from Europe and the USA. Over the years, the school has benefited greatly from their help. Here are the accounts of two German volunteers at the end of their stay.

Moira Pasberg

Since August 2017 I have been volunteering in Aikiyam School. In the beginning I was assisting mainly in the second standard, where I built a good connection with the children and the teachers as well. Since I really enjoyed being in that class I decided to mainly work with them. I help the children with reading practice in English, teach them songs, correct exercises, read stories, play games and draw posters for the classroom. I also work regularly in the first and third standards and in the kindergarten which I really enjoy. One week in March I joined the class-trip of the eighth standard to Agra and Delhi. That was a very good experience for me and a good chance to get an impression of the older children of Aikiyam. I also joined the teachers' trip to Hyderabad which was a nice experience as well. Travelling together strengthens the relationships with each other, which is valuable for the atmosphere in the school. In general Aikiyam makes it possible for me to experience a lot of varied and happy moments. All the teachers are friendly and it is a pleasure to work with them. During the school holidays I got to know



Moira Pasberg with children at Aikiyam school



Niklas Maries helping a student at Aikiyam school

the ammas of Aikiyam a little bit better and enjoyed helping them sometimes... Aikiyam, and especially the children with their big smiles, make me very happy. I feel so lucky to be here in this school and will miss it a lot when I will go back home to Germany in August.

Niklas Mariss

When it was time to choose where I wished to work in Auroville, I said: "anything but school." Yet somehow I landed in Aikiyam and I am happy about it. I have really enjoyed my time so far! Everyone, the teachers, the students and the support staff, have been very welcoming. Over the past 10 months I made many friends at this place. I worked together with Anbu at supportive learning, with Dev at the clay class, in the sports classes and in the kindergarten. I enjoyed all of them and learned a lot. Over the summer holidays I built a little playground and helped the ammas with their work. I'm looking joyfully back on my last 10 months and I am looking forward to the remaining two months in Aikiyam and Auroville.

Volunteers welcome

If anyone would like to volunteer at Aikiyam, please go to the Aikiyam website at www.aikiyamschool.org/volunteering where you will find more details, including how to apply.

Donations

Aikiyam school relies on private donations for a large part of its funding. Please see below details of two students who need help.

If you wish to help these girls please contact John Mulrey:
john@aviuk.org – 01296 415685

Parkavi

Parkavi's family moved into Kuyilapalayam Village in search of jobs. Her father works as a bus conductor on one of the city buses. Her mother takes care of the house.

They are good parents, but the man's earning is not enough to take care of two daughters. Both the daughters study in Aikiyam School. Parkavi is also under nourished. She is motivated and studies well. She is going from 2nd grade to 3rd grade in June.

She is lucky to be one of Aikiyam School children because her study and food are taken care of by the school from Monday through Friday.



Suganya

Suganya's father is a mason and her Mother has committed suicide because of her husband's behaviour. She has three sisters, and two of them stay in students' boarding. She is the eldest sister and stays with her father in their grandparents' house.

This year she was promoted from 6th to 7th grade. She an intelligent student and badly needs support, even to attend a school with very low fees like Aikiyam School.

Even though the actual cost to a student is Rs. 1800 per month, the school charges a subsidised fee from the students like Suganya. She is expected to pay Rs.8500 (Indian rupees) for the whole year. A big part of the fee will cover text books, note books and all other stationery supplies.





After school Thamarai film production skills activity

Thamarai

What we can see in Auroville

In Auroville we can see the Matrimandir and the accompanying beautiful gardens. We can see all the millions of wonderful trees, take comfort in their connection to the soil and water, and enjoy the shade they provide.

We can see all the different buildings, marvel at the different architectural styles and enjoy the comfort provided by the guest houses.

We can see a whole variety of many other things, the farms, the schools, the food and restaurants and all the commercial units producing a colourful array of products.

But what many visitors don't see in Auroville?

Many visitors don't see the Aurovilians going into the local villages supporting the local population and particularly the children. There are almost 50 Auroville projects now providing outreach

services, as can be seen in a new exhibition in the Visitors Centre.

These Aurovilians aspire to build relationships and to provide understanding, hope, direction, empowerment, and ultimately love, through organising educational and health programmes through free playgroups, after school groups and health/healing programs. But occasionally, they face opposition, cultural barriers and even hostility.

One such Aurovilian is Bridget who is one of the co-founders and co-ordinator of Thamarai Educational Projects. Bridget kindly showed me some of the various buildings they operate from. She explained that Thamarai services provide educational support in as many villages as they can, some in the south and some in the north of Auroville.

She also introduced me to some local educated, dedicated youth who had come forward to help as facilitators to guide the children.

Evolving

Their work is constantly evolving. For example, after one healing centre was shut down in a village, a new mobile health programme was designed by Aurovilian Muthukumari, who grew up in Moratandi village. This program now reaches several government schools and many women's groups.

When finances allow, new programmes are being offered. For example, some students practice Silambam weekly, a traditional martial art, which is a stick folk dance known to improve concentration.

Empowerment

Bridget explained that apart from their usual educational program, a leadership program is offered, based on Monica Sharma's book Stewardship for New Emergence. This book is used to support children and youth to source their own inner power for project design, to create solutions to problems they want to address.

So, Thamarai children have been trained to design projects. Some have chosen to work on water and waste management, education and sports development and overall wellbeing in the village.

Snowball effect

After training in the yoga and healing program many women take these skills and approaches to their own communities, and many have started their own yoga classes in their villages.

The truly wonderful thing is that some of the youth that were once students of Thamarai are now coming to ask for support in starting activities to help other local children, in the same way they were helped many years ago.

The love has come full circle.

Breaking down barriers

Thamarai's work not only builds bridges between the Aurovilians and the local population but also between different castes in the local population. For example, the main after school centre is in a Dalit (previously known



After school Thamarai design activity with students and volunteers

as untouchables) village, and other children from non-Dalit villages are allowed to go to the programs by their parents.

Help Thamarai to bloom

The beauty behind all this work is that it is not just about educational support, it is also about empowerment, supporting people to recognise their

own greatness and their own talents.

All this work is not visible, but Thamarai means lotus and all Thamarai's work involves helping the inner lotus of disadvantaged people, and particularly children, to flower.

If you wish to help Thamarai with their work, please contact John Mulrey:
john@aviuk.org – 01296 415685

We are all moving on

Making a will – Leaving money to Auroville

It is a sad fact that we are all moving on, and one day we will leave our friends and family. The conventional wisdom is that we should all make a will, to give clarity to our wishes and to the executors of our will.

Obviously, firstly we would want to leave money and other belongings to our loved ones, but maybe we can consider leaving something to a worthy cause.

How to leave money to Auroville, via Auroville International UK

After providing for loved ones some people in the past have very kindly bequeathed money to Auroville. This is a simple process. For clarity, please

include the full details of our charity in your will. Also include specific details of any Auroville project you would like your bequest to be used for: for example, Matrimandir or Land purchase or a particular farm or school.

Charity details:

Our full name is – Auroville International UK.

Charity Commission registered number – 290746.

Also, as our charity has good contacts with Auroville, it is possible for us to easily pass on any money for Auroville.

What you can leave to Auroville via Auroville International UK

Cash – you state in your will that you wish to leave £X amount.

Specific – you can state in your will that you leave a particular item or items such as property or shares.

Residuary – you can state in your will that you wish that once everything

else has been paid such as gifts, taxes, debts and costs to leave what's left to Auroville.

Saving tax by leaving money to Auroville – Inheritance tax (IHT)

Leaving money to a charity in your will can significantly reduce the inheritance tax bill for your heirs. If you would like any specific advice on this, please contact John at **john@aviuk.org**.

Of course, you don't have to wait until you die to donate to a charity, but leaving money in your will can make sure you continue to help Auroville and cut your tax bill.

Important note

All the above information does not constitute any form of financial advice. Please do not rely on this information to make (or refrain from making decisions). Always obtain independent, professional advice for your own particular situation.

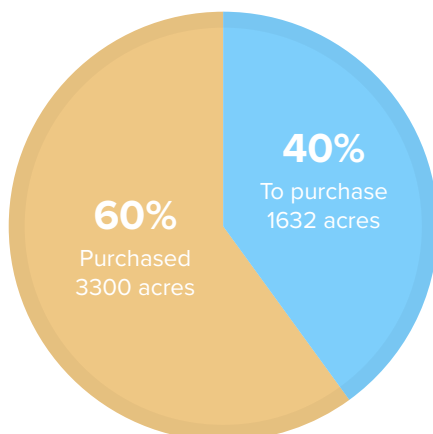
A love for the Land

The history – regenerating the barren land

They came, as pioneers starting an impossible mission on an eroded plateau in 1968. Everything needed to be done. Pioneering years were spent under the sun, planting and watering the very first trees, living a rather ascetic lifestyle in rural India, with passion and spirit, focused on building an ideal society. Auroville land was interspersed with the fields of local villagers.

Early Aurovilians learned much from the rural culture while they offered work and vocational training to the villagers, and education for their children. Auroville's intercultural lifestyle is well grounded in its neighbourhood and India - around 45% of its population is Indian, many of them born in the neighbouring villages.

Pioneers started work the day after the inauguration – first roads, borewells, huts, followed by the first planting: fast growing acacia trees, and finally birds appeared. Life comprised of a lot of sky, sun, and the space to create a new society.



Currently

In 50 years, the foresters regenerated the barren plateau into the lush tropical dry evergreen forest which it originally carried. Nature responded amazingly to the ardent efforts in water conservation and afforestation work. Today biodiversity has returned in the whole bioregion: the seeds of trees and shrubs have been spread by the birds. The sanctuary forest attracts a wide variety of birds, reptiles, even wild cats, bats, porcupines, and deer.

Auroville's expertise in land regeneration – be it afforestation, organic farming, water conservation, restoring water systems and soil, is well sought-after throughout India, even internationally.

The Future

Auroville wants to continue its love for the land. If you wish to help, please contact John Mulrey:
john@aviuk.org – 01296 415685

*The lands for Auroville
are to be bought and
can be bought -
The money is needed
will you help?*

Mirra Alfassa, The Mother



Aurovilian and Tamil workers completing bunding work



The City Area

Control the Land, Control the Water

Water conservation on Auroville land over the past 50 years

Auroville started on a barren plateau – with water as a major concern since the very beginning. For decades the monsoon took along with it the red earth. In the tropics, as soon as land is barren, or non-porous due to buildings and roads, water run-off and erosion start rapidly.

To reverse this, Auroville has done major water conservation work: kilometres of bunds and countless water catchment ponds have been built to retain the rainwater.

For the past 30 years, members of the Auroville Water Group have been working on Auroville's water situation, monitoring the water table in the wells, the groundwater flows and aquifers, and defining needed groundwater protection areas. Since the 1980's, Aurovilians have led many projects to restore the traditional water catchment systems in the wider bioregion.

Today, due to the tremendous water conservation work, and because of the densely planted forest, Auroville's rainwater runoff is minimal. Trees create a porous soil into which rainwater can percolate, and they protect the soil from the harsh weather conditions.

Bioregion situation

Today the groundwater level is falling in Auroville's bioregion, as well as in many regions in Tamil Nadu due to over-exploitation of water for agriculture and Pondicherry's rapid expansion. There has been saltwater intrusion near Auroville's beach at the ECR road for over 10 years. The Water Group is acutely aware of this situation:

"Consolidating lands within the Auroville township area and working out a prioritisation of land acquisition for hydrological continuity is an urgent priority in order to strategically work to protect the groundwater resources for Auroville and the bioregion."

Crisis in Auroville

Many of the wells in Auroville are falling dry and the groundwater level on which all of Auroville depends is now lower than two years ago and it keeps going down

Auroville needs to work out how to deal with this crisis situation.

One short term and long term solution – buying more land

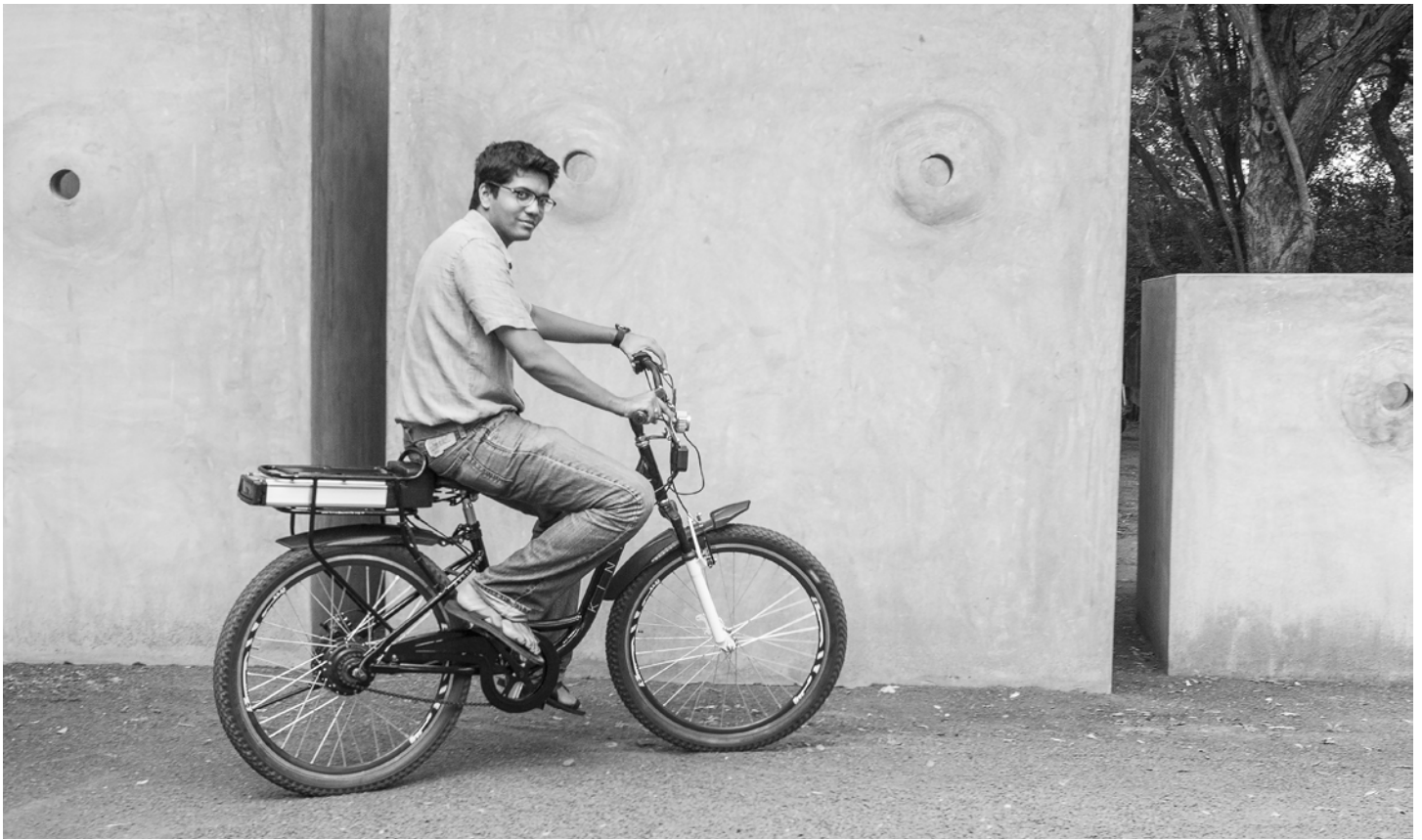
If we control the Land, we control the Water. Today, 10% of City Area land & over 50% of Greenbelt land are still missing from the Master Plan area. This is why fundraising for land an urgent priority for Auroville.

So if you If you'd like to help to improve the water situation and see Auroville manifest and flourish, please donate for Auroville's land and future, by contacting John Mulrey:

john@aviuk.org – 01296 415685



Water and Land being wasted just outside the City Area



Dedo on one of his Kinisi electric cycles

Transport in Auroville

Current trends

In Auroville and its bioregion there is an increasing move (please excuse the pun) towards more motorised transportation.

Firstly, there is a shift from bicycles to mopeds and motorcycles. This is the result of more and more people wanting to be independent and move more easily to their work and different locations.

Secondly there is a shift towards more cars for various reasons.

Obviously, India is more prosperous, car ownership has grown, and people feel more comfortable to come to Auroville and Puducherry in their own car. Also, they will be more mobile when they arrive here.

As the number of visitors and guests has grown over the last 10 years so have the number of cars.

People, especially women, and especially at odd hours, feel unsafe

on bicycles. They do not want to take chances and additionally are wary of accidents.

Also, people do not want to be subjected to dusty roads which are as bad for the lungs as smoking cigarettes.

All these trends have resulted in an increased load on Auroville's roads and infrastructure.

Overall Plan

Two Aurovilians, Min and Chandresh, have been concerned with the lack of transportation planning and have launched a new initiative called Integrated Transport Service, (ITS).

ITS recognises that Auroville communities are scattered and there is a general trend to wanting more comfort, convenience and individual mobility.

Starting from an acceptance of people's needs they are trying to see what solutions they can offer.

Actions – cars

One initiative, which has a long history, is a shared taxi service from Auroville / Ashram to Chennai airport.

After some resistance from Auroville's own taxi companies, the system is working well.

This system is good for the environment, saves energy and fares have come down.

There is an initiative to start a shuttle service from the Solar kitchen to Chennai Airport. This idea could work well because the metro has been built in Chennai. So, if you are dropped off at the airport, you can take a metro to the train station or go to other key places in Chennai.

Actions – cycles

There has been an effort to creating and looking after cycle paths and improving them. These paths are still a lifeline for my cyclists and

their maintenance costs money. Fortunately, the budget Coordinating Committee have been kind enough to support them. There is also an effort to promote cycles for recreation and giving help to maintain them.

Actions – electric cycles

Kinisi, located in the CSR, sells and rents electric cycles. These are one of the most ecological ways for people to move around Auroville. Kinisi's long term goal is to provide an affordable electric bicycle to all guests and residents who need one, thus greatly reducing the pollution, noise and dust in Auroville.

In one year Kinisi was able to put 80+ e-cycles on the roads of Auroville and they plan to increase their fleet steadily over the years.

In the spirit of Auroville, Kinisi is implementing a system whereby Aurovilians receive an e-cycle for their personal use in exchange for a reasonably monthly contribution, covering maintenance, battery and cycle replacement.

Aurovilians get the best of both worlds, a personal ecological vehicle and hassle free maintenance.

Actions – electric scooters

Luckily their technology has greatly improved, they can go 50km an hour and absorb bumps a lot better, the batteries are improving. 10 years ago people were scared to go far because if the scooter let you down, dragging it all the way home was a hassle. Now the batteries are more reliable and have a warranty of 5 years. It is hoped that in the future the batteries will be recyclable.

The plan, as with the electric cycles, is to make them available for rent for guests and visitors.

Also it is hoped that Aurovilians will replace their cars with these scooters.

Actions – electric rickshaws

It is possible to call to hire an electric rickshaw. Most of the requests for their use come from calls from the visitors centre and being flagged down on the road.

Experience shows that guests who stay longer, and Newcomers, did not make use of the service.

One Aurovilian family has found the rickshaw a good option for "busing" their children along with a few of the neighbours' children between school, sports & home.

Future plans

ITS is talking to all the governing bodies about how to regulate

offer non-polluting transport options inside the city area.

The global trend is that people feel less and less the need to own something. They have the use of a car but they don't necessarily want to own one.

One vision would be that one could contribute to a transportation package or packages that would give access to, for example 25 days of cycle, 3 days of scooter, 2 days of car and some taxis etc.

Another vision that is to have a ring road and then have 12 arteries or radials radiating from the ring road. Then on each radial you have a kind of small electric train and/or electric auto-rickshaws that are connected to the other radials. Then people would only have a short walk from one point to another, at least to have this for the centre area.

The hope generally is that ITS can help to move the community towards more collective transport solutions, towards more sustainable and quiet transport.

Please note this article is a summary of an article in the book –

Auroville – smart city of another kind, published by Auroville Press, aurovillepress@auroville.org.in ISBN 978-81-936266-7-2

In one year Kinisi was able to put 80+ e-cycles on the roads of Auroville and they plan to increase their fleet steadily over the years.

polluting traffic coming into Auroville. Hopefully to create parking spaces outside the city and then obviously



Young Aurovilians on an electric kickshaw

AVI UK Meeting June 2019

Venue

AVI UK tried a new venue – The Poetry Society at Covent Garden London, to host a public meeting. This venue pleased most people, it was easy to travel to, it had good facilities, the food was good and the staff were friendly.



AVI UK meeting at the Poetry Society, London

Themes

There were two themes – Auroville and the epic poem Savitri. Auroskanda had done a lot of research and showed some short informative films about Auroville.

After a short presentation, Neeraj read out a passage from Savitri and led a discussion afterwards about the meaning behind the passage. Savitri provided a topic that many people contributed to. Auroskanda then showed more short films, specifically

about Education and Greenwork in Auroville, which were well received.

Overall impression and reaction

The whole afternoon provided a lovely venue at a reasonable price, enabling us to see several old friends and share our mutual love of Auroville. There were four people at the meeting who were new to Auroville, and two

stayed for the whole afternoon and engaged in the discussions. The two newcomers were young people who were clearly searching for something new, and were interested in what they heard and were shown. It was disappointing that more newcomers were not present, but afterwards some people thought that if we attempted a similar meeting, our social media presence needed to be improved.

Sussex University Event

Plans are in place for a photographic exhibition about Auroville and a seminar discussion about Auroville at Sussex University.

It is hoped both will take place October / November 2019.

As soon as dates are confirmed our website will carry all the details as will an email to everyone on our email database.

For more news and information visit our website:
aviuk.org

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Auroville International
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