

# Vision Statement

## The 360 Centre



**March 2021**



*The right place*  
*The right idea*  
*The right time*

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# 1 Beginnings

In early summer 2020, a few friends met quite by chance on a walk along the shore path between Port Seton and Prestonpans. Discussion ensued about the difficulties of lockdown life, our fears for the future and the future of the younger generations, with the impact of a pandemic combined with the much bigger challenges of Climate Change which had been hitting the headlines. Standing on the beach that evening, looking out at the sunset and towards the Cockenzie Power Station Site, we began to discuss the sorts of ideas which could bring some hope to the communities. Dreams and visions – one idea following another – a centre to educate about Climate Change, an amazing art installation, a pier with green ferries running up and down the coastline and over to Fife - until we had almost created a complete alternative plan which could have a massively positive impact on the site, the communities and the world!

A flight of fancy for sure and most of the time these conversations remain just that. But one of the group decided it was worth trying to take this further. Why not actually put together an alternative vision for the site – with the communities at the very heart and just see how far we could get? Gathering opinions, speaking to all those involved, creating a sense of excitement and possibility – and that is exactly the stage we are at.

This is the beginnings of the vision – with space and opportunity to bring others into the conversations. The opportunity to create real partnerships between all those who could be involved – communities – young and old, council, policy makers, government, historians and scientists, economists and artists, architects, environmentalists and renewable energy companies. How much can be achieved if we seek the best from all these people and the opportunities to bring them together to create something unique, economically viable and most importantly make a real contribution to the challenge of Climate Change.

# 2 Background

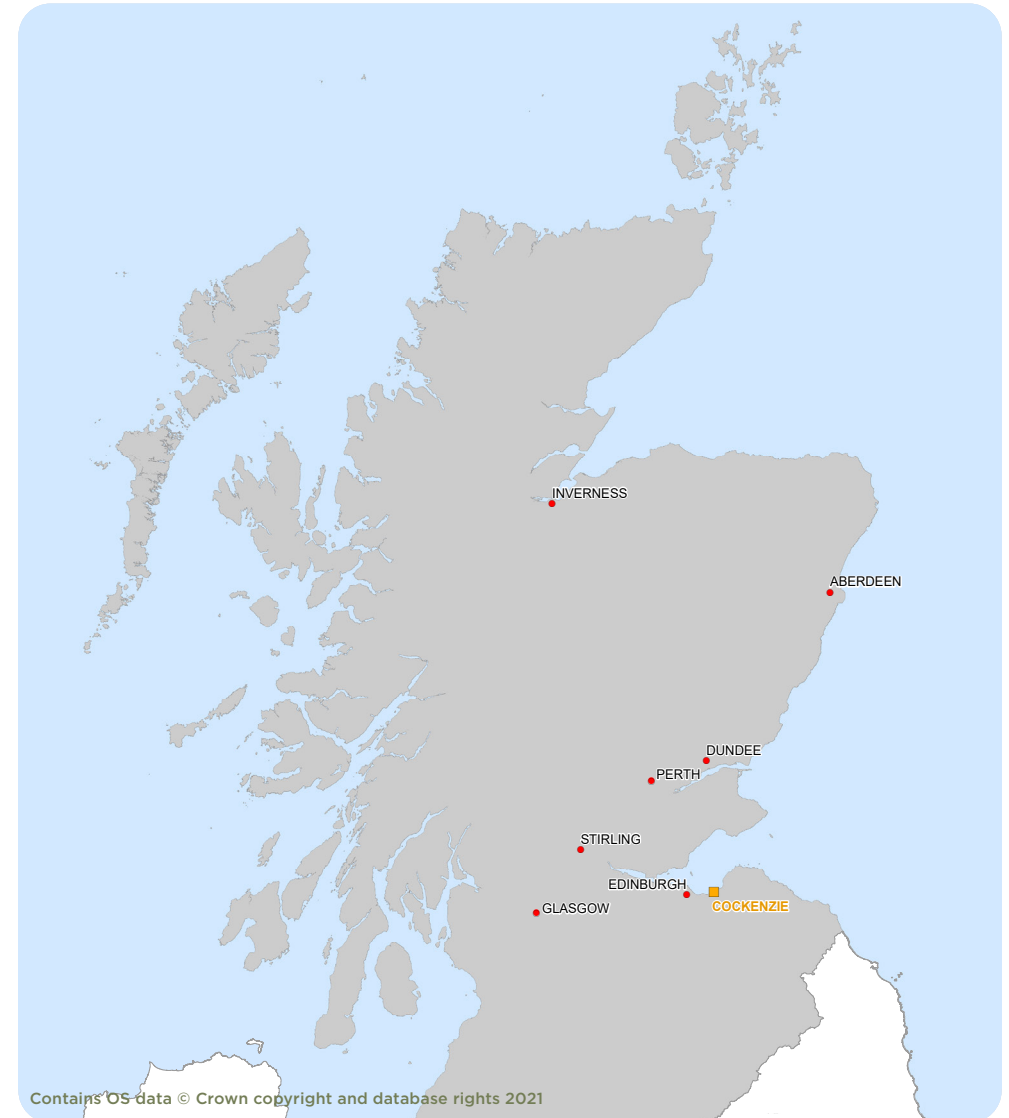
## The Site

Between the communities of Prestonpans, Cockenzie and Port Seton, beside the Greenhills, is a site which sits right on the edge of the Forth; a post-industrial area with an old pier stretching out into the sea and wonderful uninterrupted views towards Arthur's Seat and Edinburgh Castle and across to the Fife coastline. It sits within a beautiful green space, the John Muir Way running along the edge by the sea, and the community orchard across the road to the south.

For five years, since Cockenzie Power Station was demolished and the iconic chimneys came down, the search has been on to find the right use for this unique piece of land.

Following the decline of many local industries, and the loss of thousands of jobs across the area in the preceding decades, the demolition of Cockenzie Power Station in 2015 seemed to mark the end of an era. Today the empty site sits at the centre of the area with the hope that a new purpose can be found, a purpose that will unite communities, provide high quality jobs, improve educational outcomes, and meet local ambition.

The community are coming together around the concept of building a unique and ambitious centre within a rewilded area which can incorporate all of the most important aspects of the site and its heritage - the beauty of the marine and natural environment, the wealth of arts and culture across the area, a proud industrial heritage, and the desire to be at the cutting edge of the technology and practice that will help address the Climate and Ecological Emergency – a centre which has the environment, and our changing climate at its heart.



# 3 The Proposal

## The 360 Vision

It's a 360° vision that could be accommodated on this site within a major new centre – the 360 Centre – that would have local, national, and international importance. Our centre would look outwards at the marine environment – a key indicator of climate change; downwards towards the industrial heritage of the mines which stretch out under the Forth but are now themselves being explored to provide much needed clean green geothermal energy; upwards to the sky – where the carbon we've released is warming the planet; around at the rich tradition of arts, culture, and innovation along our coast - the murals and tapestries, the artists and musicians who live in the communities as well as back to where we have come from – to the importance of the industrial heritage which has shaped both the communities and the land over the past hundreds of years and finally, forwards towards a vision of the future for the next generations to come.

## Local Aspiration

Our local communities are proud of their industrial heritage and keen to see employment opportunities come to the area. But they also want to see the amenity of the area being maximised and the beauty of the green space and coastline preserved. This proposal provides an opportunity to build on all three of these aspirations.

## The Building

Within the centre would be cutting edge immersive exhibitions, the use of digital and virtual reality seen to its full potential, explanations of the importance of renewable energy, sunset viewing platforms, domed digital planetariums, lecture theatres doubling as arts and music venues, arts and science combined with the sea on the doorstep making full use of the unique and glorious natural environment of the surrounding area. It would act as an interpretation centre for neighbouring renewable energy initiatives as well as a centre for education, skills training and support for industries across Scotland seeking to address the Climate Change agenda and become more carbon neutral.

## The Pier

The pier itself could form a part of the art installation and would be a real draw for visitors, with ferries and boats powered by green energy linking the site to the capital. This could also provide the opportunity to reinstate links with Fife and East Lothian's coastal towns and take visitors out on the Forth for wildlife and heritage cruises.

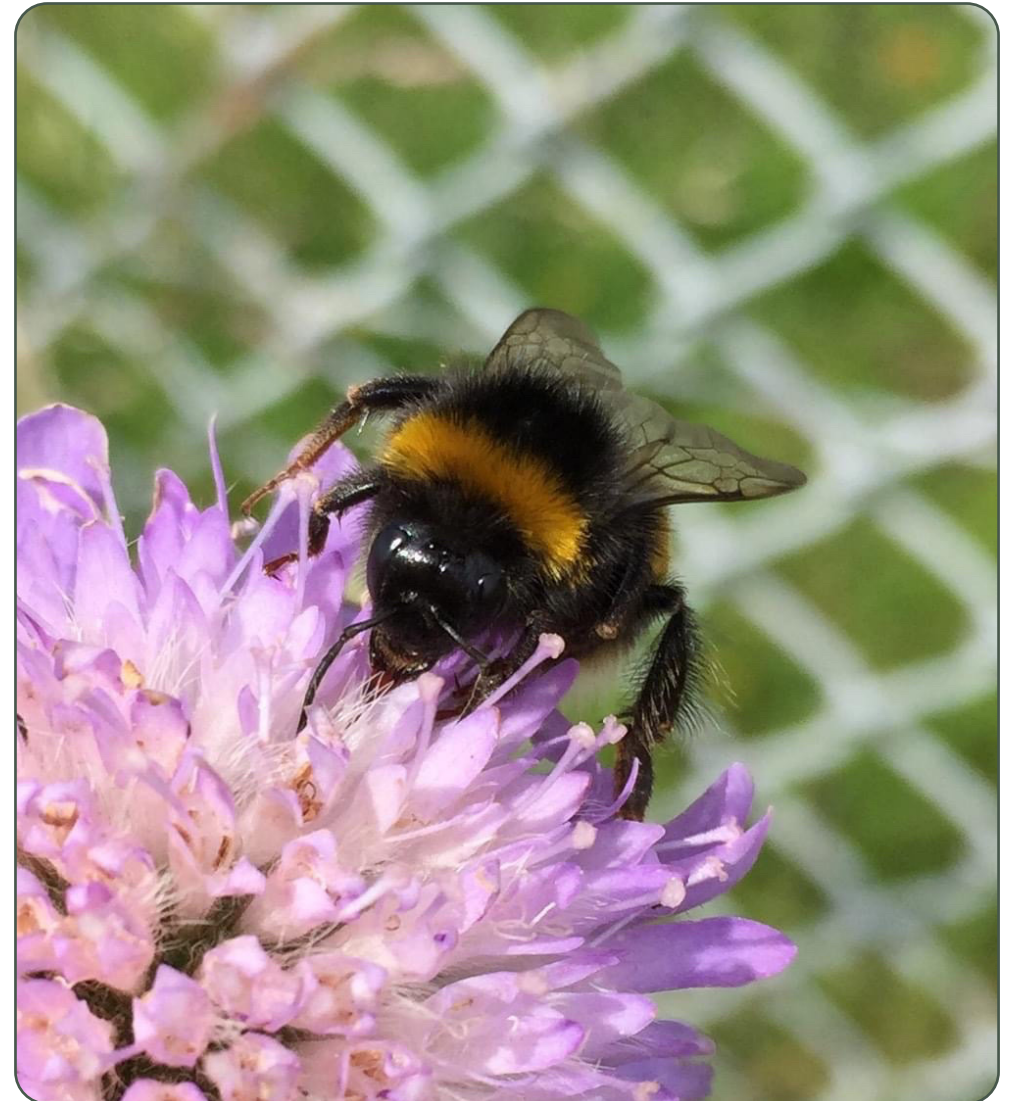
## The Environment

The green space between these communities is becoming increasingly important to people as housing developments continue apace across the area. The land around the 360 centre would be landscaped to become an integrated part of the whole concept and part of the attraction itself – with grasslands and water parks interspersed with walkways, highlighting the natural environment and providing local communities and visitors with a beautiful space in keeping with the aims and objectives of the 360 Centre.

There are a wide range of nesting birds on the site currently and developing the right habitats around the site would help to protect and increase these numbers. Native planting could also be undertaken, suitable for a coastal site, increasing the biodiversity as well as providing opportunities to develop areas for bird watching and marine watching facilities. The habitats around this area of coastline attract a huge number and range of species of birds and are a renowned birdwatchers paradise. The Forth attracts dolphins, porpoises and whales which have been seen in increasing numbers over the past few years, a further opportunity to attract visitors from all around the UK.

## Employment

The 360 Centre would hope to create around 200 jobs in the first instance with the potential to create many more as the facility develops. A training programme would be an integral part of the build project as well as the running of the centre itself. The facility could provide additional training facilities for green energy companies – both the physical and structural aspects and the wider requirements of skills development within the green energy sector. This would lead to potential job opportunities both for the local communities but also once established, as a training facility for those from further afield.





# 4 Collaboration: the importance of partnerships

## Partnering for Success

This initiative will only be possible with a forward-looking partnership approach. The community will work closely with local groups and organisations, community councils, the Local Area Partnership, East Lothian Council, Scottish Government, as well as academic partnerships, organisations with similar climate change agendas and private companies linked to the area including those who will be based on the site.

## Young East Lothian

Climate change has far reaching consequences not least for the younger members of our communities. Using existing groups and creating a new group around the whole concept of the 360, the views and ideas of the younger generation are being sought and they will be very much involved in the proposals. They would take an active part in the research, development and delivery of this project. They are seen as key stakeholders. We feel it is vitally important that the youth of our area can see the legacy of the industrial heritage taken forward in such a positive way and to be able to link their own place and their own communities with positive action for the future.

A social media campaign using Instagram has been identified by local youngsters as the most effective way to engage the younger community with this proposal and it is intended to take this forward in the next few weeks as ideas for the development are being collected and taken forward.

## East Lothian Council

East Lothian Council are also pursuing a forward thinking and ambitious plan to put this area at the heart of the Scottish Government's national climate change agenda with a ClimatEvolution proposal currently in place which links the production of geothermal energy to be used in new housing developments in the area as well as a green agenda for travel, waterways as well as cultural activities.

We would work closely with this proposal and consultation and help to push forward the aspects which crossover with the communities aims and objectives. Currently there are no plans indicated within the ClimatEvolution for the Power Station Site, but mention has been made to include a Climate Resilience Centre within the wider area. The idea of the 360 Centre clearly fits closely with these proposals and could be the delivery mechanism for many. The location of the former Power Station Site is seen as key by the 360 Centre Group with the opportunity to work collaboratively with East Lothian Council and energy companies in and around the site.

## Private Companies

Initial meetings have been held with Inch Cape Wind Farm Development who currently have planning permission to build a substation on the edge of the site – with permission currently to use around one quarter of the site with their focus on wind generated renewable energy. This fits well with the community's vision for the site. They are interested in collaborating particularly with regard to interpretation of the renewable energy sector.

Other companies have also expressed interest in the site, but as part of the renewable energy sector this would be completely compatible with the aims and objectives of the 360 Centre.

## Social Enterprises and Local Businesses

We would also encourage and support the creation of social enterprises around the site which are in keeping with the underlying message of climate change. The creation of coastal defences as a business in its own right has already been suggested as well as training for those working in the renewable energy sector, and there are numerous other ideas which could be taken forward to increase the employment opportunities in the area.

The 360 Centre would have the potential to impact very positively on the regeneration of the surrounding businesses and encourage further investment in visitor accommodation, restaurants, cafes and local food and drink production. The beach front and car park at Prestonpans is another area which could benefit from investment and development and could be tied in with this initiative.

## Academic Partnerships

Discussions have taken place with individuals from Scottish universities including Edinburgh Napier University and the University of the Highlands and Islands. While there are academic centres for research, and there are national and international collaborations around energy production and national marine and land parks – there is as yet no facility in existence for the general public to learn what Climate Change really means and to have the opportunity to learn about Climate Change – but to do so in a visionary, creative and educational way. This is an opportunity not just to display the implications of climate change – using both local, national and international examples – but to put forward mitigation measures which can be undertaken by individuals, communities and countries. This is the perfect site for a National Centre for Climate Change – a learning centre and study area combined, with universities able to use the space for meetings and for conferences, as well as opportunities to engage with schools – not least the local high school, Preston Lodge.



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Location Aerial Map

# 5 Tourism and Economics

## Tourism

Both existing and future tourist organisations and attractions will benefit substantially from this initiative. We have been in touch with local camp site Seton Sands to include them in the development of this proposal.

As well as providing jobs, with the inclusion of an art-installation such as the three large scale statues of women, the 360 Centre would provide an incredible visitor attraction for the area - attracting people from all over the UK and beyond. We would hope to be able to replicate the visitor numbers of the Eden Centre but our aim is for this centre to become not just a visitor attraction, but a major learning and cultural centre of national and international importance.

As well as a centre for the education, the centre will be part of a major art installation - a tourist attraction with a powerful message. We would anticipate creating a large inflow of visitors to the area, and based upon the numbers visiting similar facilities - the potential to attract around 500,000 visitors per year.

## A Network of Attractions

Linked to other current initiatives in the local area including heritage attractions such as Preston Tower and Prestongrange Heritage Park, the 1722 Waggonway and the John Muir Way, visitors would have the opportunity to visit a network of attractions. The 360 Centre would encourage longer stays in the immediate area, and opportunities for other local facilities such as these – and also cafes, public houses and shops to benefit. Established facilities and businesses across Preston Seton and Gosford would also gain from an influx of additional visitors coming specifically to the area and a green travel network could be developed to service the range of attractions on offer.

## Economics

The local economy and the creation of jobs is vitally important to our area and is a major driver for the creation of the 360 Centre.

Haven Seton Sands Holiday Village is a long-established visitor facility and caravan park to the east of Cockenzie and Port Seton which employs around 150 staff members and attracts 20,000 visitors per year. They recently invested £2.7m in a water park on their site which opened in 2017. They would welcome an additional attraction in the area as would all other tourist facilities in the local communities.

## Precedents

Public art has been shown to change public perceptions of places and draw in many thousands of visitors. Similar facilities which include both an art installation and visitor centre in Scotland include the Helix Centre near Falkirk with the iconic Kelpies which opened in 2014 and includes a visitor centre and café. This has been incredibly beneficial to the area providing an amazing visitor attraction and changing the whole identity of the location and the associated communities. This combination of art installation and education centre is something which the 360 Centre could do even more effectively using the Climate Change agenda which continues to grow in importance year on year.

Another successful and inspirational concept is the Eden Centre in Cornwall, built on an old chalk mine, which opened in 2001 and now employs over 400 full-time staff, 200 seasonal staff and 150 volunteers. There is also an apprenticeship programme covering a variety of careers. Around 1 million people visit the centre each year.

The Eden Centre has gone global and is undertaking similar projects worldwide with innovative visitor attractions with relevance to the local areas. They recently put forward plans to site their first Scottish centre in Dundee which is at an early stage in development. While the creative vision of our project is similar to the Eden project, the aims, objectives and message of the 360 Centre is different in that it is very firmly rooted in the idea of renewable green energy and the climate change agenda, with a collaborative approach to both the development and implementation with the community at its heart.



Above: Eden Centre, Cornwall 2001 , built on a disused chalk mine

Below: Proposed Eden Centre, Morecombe

# 6 Opportunities



## Public Art

Whilst having an important function and purpose, the centre would also be built as part of a major public art installation. Statues already designed by local artist Andrew Crummy, could represent the women of our communities - the women miners from earlier years, the miner's wives, the fisher wives – but also have resonance globally as women of the world – as mother earth. They could take the iconic position once held by the Chimneys – either singly or as a pair. Or statues could sit within the site itself around a globe or dome shaped buildings.

One of the statues could act as a viewing platform with visitors being able to take a lift up to the top of the statue and look out across the Forth from her eyeline.

Artwork by Andrew Crummy

## Concepts

### 1 | Derived from Nature

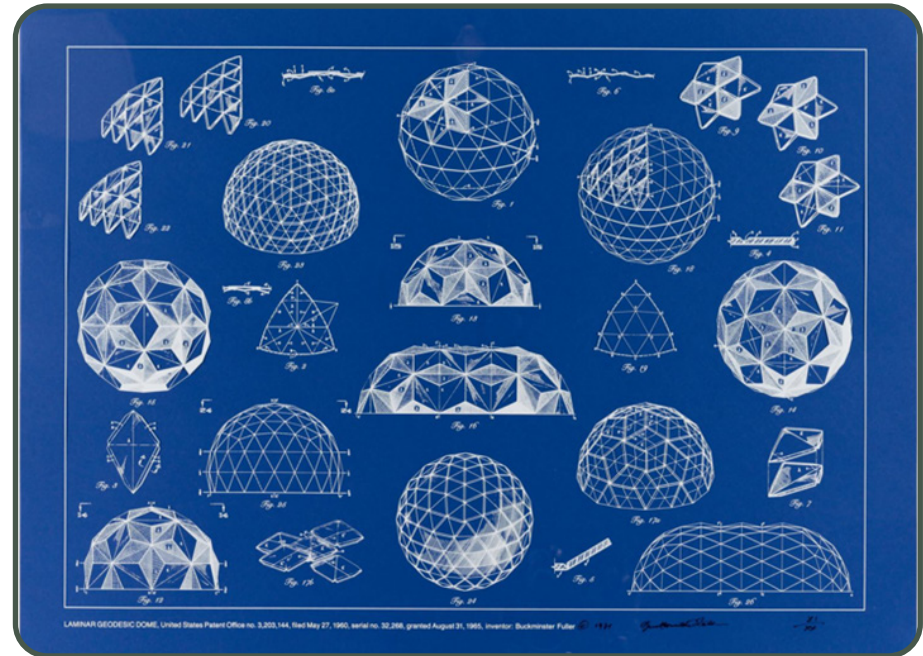
This image below was produced by American architect Jo Callie who used the site as her final year project. Her idea was to be inspired by the need to transition post-industrial sites into the future - using the landscape and nature to create ecologically diverse site-specific area for people to enjoy as well as wild life to flourish. In this last image, the 360 could be contained in the mounds that wrap around the flooded footprint.

Jo Callie website



### 2 | Building Form

Alternatively the use of Buckminster Fuller's geodesic domes (below) – strong but lightweight – would allow a building or several buildings to be built relatively easily and cheaply on the site – in an entirely environmentally friendly way. They could be built within or on top of the site – or even within a flooded area. One idea was to have a complete globe shape – to represent the earth itself. But these are all decisions which would be made by the wider community and by the constraints of cost and implementation.



# 7 Conclusion

Nowhere in the UK or elsewhere has such a facility been created with the aim of providing an attraction with such an important educational message. On the site of a coal fired power station, powered with energy from the flooded East Lothian Coal Field, and looking directly out at the marine environment - the idea, the location and the time are absolutely right.

The opportunity to work with the Renewable Energy Industries providing an interpretation centre is one which would have considerable benefits to all involved. Many other companies are also looking at the potential to become carbon neutral and there will be many more in the coming years. This centre could provide the support and information on climate change right across industrial sectors.

Working with the ClimatEvolution proposal for East Lothian Council, we would ensure that all the aspects of the build would be undertaken with the environmental impact firmly at its heart. Indeed, the ClimatEvolution proposal provides this project with a clear route for delivery – as a community initiative in collaboration with East Lothian Council and other partners from the public and private sector. During the build itself, apprenticeships could be offered across a variety of trades.

The very real opportunity to use geothermal energy within this development would also make it more cost effective and more innovative as well as being completely tied in with the aims and objectives of the Centre itself. The opportunity to interpret the use of renewable energy both as part of this development and part of the Inch Cape Wind Farm development too could be an important aspect of the educational purpose of the centre itself.

What better place for a Climate Change Centre – the 360 Centre, than on an area which has been mined for almost 1000 years and the site of a coal fired Power Station and now sitting alongside a substation for renewable energy?

What better way to redress the balance of our industrial past and to look forward. To look out over the ocean and provide a unique and creative way to show people what the future could hold as well as how important this place is and the importance of our place within the world itself.





# 8 Next Steps

The next step is to commission a feasibility study. A feasibility study would be required to ascertain if this project is viable and the potential costs involved. It would also be undertaken in conjunction with a wider community consultation process and consultation with other potential stakeholders.

The key aims and objectives are summarised as follows.

- **Develop a centre of international importance within the field of Climate Change**
- **Create local jobs**
- **Raise the aspirations of the area**
- **Realise the strength of a community led proposal and development**
- **Create a destination – an inspirational and unique visitor attraction**
- **Create a clean and green area – and link to the East Lothian Council’s ClimatEvolution proposals – using this theme to lead all development**
- **Retain the natural assets and the amenity of this special coastal site.**

We welcome your thoughts and views on this vision and any additions or offers of support will be gratefully received.

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