THE CONSTITUTION OF MERCIA

The Mercian Constitutional Convention
The publication of *The Constitution Of Mercia* marks a vital step in a continuing programme of positive action designed to achieve the re-creation of Mercia as an autonomous and sustainable bioregion within an English confederation. The document has been inspired by the ideas of the radical political movement extant in England for almost a millennium which has campaigned to free its historic and natural regions from the illegal and suffocating control of the authoritarian forces of the United Kingdom. Consequently, *The Constitution* offers the people of Mercia a new holistic society based on organic democracy, co-operative community and ecological balance.

The production of *The Constitution* is the direct result of the UK government’s complete refusal to engage in any talks on the future of the Midlands with the democratic regionalists represented by the Mercia Movement. This high-handed and hypocritical rejection of discussions occurred in spite of the government’s 1997 election manifesto commitment to ‘the democratic renewal of our country through decentralisation’ and to ‘decentralise power throughout the United Kingdom’. Therefore, the Mercia Movement produced a draft Constitution, based on the principles presented in its 1997 *Mercia Manifesto*, and invited the people of the Midlands to consider its contents and implications through the Mercian Constitutional Convention, which was formed in March 2001.

The Convention decided to amend the document and spent over two years modifying the text to produce *The Constitution*, which consequently is now the ultimate legal authority in Mercia, but remains subject to amendment by the people of the region. Finally, as a result of completing its work with the publication of this document, the Convention has now become the acting Witan of Mercia, to spearhead the full democratisation of the region and the re-establishment of its de facto independence under *The Constitution Of Mercia*. 
Mercia developed in the valleys of the upper Trent and its tributaries in the sixth century from the amalgamation of four English tribes and, from its very origin, was located in the middle lands of lowland Britain. The eighth century Tribal Hidage indicated the fusion of thirty-two separate tribes to form an expanded Mercia within its natural geographical boundaries, which stretched from the Mersey to the Humber, through the Fens to the River Lea, up the Thames to the lower Severn and along the transitional lowland to upland zone between the Severn and the Dee. Within these boundaries, the land type was relatively uniform, consisting mainly of rolling countryside, which was highly suitable for farming, whilst the climate was very similar across the region. Therefore, historic Mercia naturally constituted a highly sustainable region.

In 1066, Mercia was one of six earldoms which comprised the non-expansionist confederation of England and operated as an organic democracy. Essential power was decentralised, with folk-moots of villagers taking decisions on their local areas, whilst regional affairs were discussed by representatives. Mercia, along with the other earldoms, was administered by an earl, who was a significant voice on the national witan (the “wise men”). In turn, this body chose the king of the confederation, who held limited co-ordinational powers, which were restricted by the law. Most Mercians lived as freemen in stable subsistence farming communities which were bonded by common customs and traditions, kinship and co-operative effort on the land. They also held a great respect for the environment, as is clearly indicated by their strict observance of fertility rites, by their celebration of the passing seasons and by the nature-based essence of their old religion, which in the eleventh century had by no means been superseded by Christianity. Finally, Mercia was an extremely wealthy region, both in terms of its soil fertility and agricultural production and of its creation of magnificent jewellery, tapestries, manuscripts and literature.

Historic Mercia was annihilated by the Norman invaders after the Conquest in 1066 and its territory, along with that of the other English regions, was forcibly added to the Norman Empire. The Conquest also destroyed the region’s ancient organic democracy and imposed an hereditary absolute monarchy in its stead, under which the people were reduced in status from freemen to ‘subjects of the crown’. This set the essential political trend for the following millennium and new hierarchical political and social systems ensured the suppression of the indigenous people. The imposition of the Norman feudal system created a huge underclass of English serfs tied to foreign lords and marked the origins of the iniquitous modern class system. English community law was replaced by a centralised system of courts, in which French was the language of proceedings until at least 1362 and where arbitrary punishments were decreed. Following the Conquest, vast numbers of English people were murdered by their alien masters, removed from their land and homes and put in dungeons in castles, which were built by forced peasant labour to protect the foreign nobility. The conquerors regarded England as a source of plunder and therefore decisively altered the human relationship with the land, shifting the connection thenceforth into one of exploitation.
Today, little has changed. Mercia remains locked inside a crumbling empire, Norman in origin, which shows little inclination to release the English regions from its weakening grip. The anachronistic hereditary monarchy continues to thrive and symbolise the impotence of the millions of ‘subjects of the crown’, who are obliged to fund it, whilst only small concessions to real democracy have yet resulted from the determined efforts of countless English radicals over the centuries. Although the class system is less rigid than it was, it remains essentially intact so that rich aristocrats still live in luxury whilst homeless people beg on the streets. The centralised court system survives intact and parasitic legal “experts” continue to dispense “justice” to the disempowered Mercian masses. Worse still, the environment is currently being abused at an even faster rate than it was during the last millennium and remains grossly polluted. Consequently, destructive individualism, centralisation and generalised economic growth are leading the region and its people further down a blind alley into disaster, which can only be averted by the formation of a new society based on communalism, organic democracy and ecological balance, the selfsame principles that formed the bedrock of the sustainable society of historic Mercia.

Although almost a millennium has passed since Mercia existed as an autonomous entity, recognition of the historic region has remained remarkably strong, as can be seen through an investigation of current telephone directories. The relevant entries show that the affinity with Mercia is generally strongest in the areas of the old heartland, but they reveal that even on the periphery of the region the memory dies hard. The directories also indicate a very high degree of identification of the areas of old Mercia with the current region of the Midlands. The information provides convincing evidence that historic Mercia and the current Midlands are virtually the same geographical area and indeed it is no coincidence that the name “Midlands” became increasingly popular only from the sixteenth century onwards as the collective memory of old Mercia faded.

Despite the ruthless exploitation of the land since 1066, Mercia remains a rich farming area and therefore still constitutes a highly sustainable region. Mercia also forms a viable region culturally, with no great differences of type, and Midlanders generally see themselves as belonging neither to the north of England nor the south. Furthermore, linguistically, Mercian was a clearly recognisable dialect of Old English and survived the Norman Conquest and three centuries of domination of the French language in England to re-emerge in Middle English as a separate dialect from those in the north and south.

Despite its natural unity, Mercia was unlawfully dismantled by foreign conquerors and this Constitution consequently reaffirms its legal autonomy. Furthermore, the production of this Constitution is part of a programme of positive action aimed at the de facto re-creation of Mercia as an autonomous and sustainable bioregion within an English confederation. It was hoped that this might be achieved through a process of negotiation with the relevant representatives of the UK, especially following the election in 1997 of a Labour government, committed by its manifesto to ‘the democratic renewal of our country through decentralisation’ and to ‘decentralise political power throughout the United Kingdom’. This was put to the test by the Mercia Movement in January 2000 when letters were sent to the monarch, prime minister, deputy prime minister, home secretary, leader of the House of Commons, leader of the House of
Lords, chair of Advantage West Midlands and chairman of the East Midlands Development Agency, requesting joint meetings to discuss fully the future of the region. However, as expected, none of these key agents of political control was willing to enter into any such discussions and their refusal thereby revealed the hypocrisy of the government’s professed commitment to democratic regionalism. Therefore, a draft Constitution was produced without their assistance in January 2001 and circulated as widely as possible across the region. This led to the formation of the Mercian Constitutional Convention, on 17 March 2001, which decided to accept the draft Constitution as the basis for its deliberations and proceeded to amend it where necessary to enable the production of this *Constitution Of Mercia*. 
We, the Mercian Constitutional Convention, declare that we establish and embrace this Constitution in order to re-create Mercia as a legal and autonomous region, constructed as an organic democracy, based on holistic principles.

ARTICLE 1 – THE COMPOSITION OF MERCIA
1.1 Mercia will comprise its historic twenty shires (Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Hertfordshire, Huntingdonshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Middlesex, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Rutland, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire) or such of these as find a common Mercian identity and wish to be included in the region.
1.2 If, subsequently, the people of any of the shires wish to secede from Mercia, then the region will respect and accept the democratic will of the shire concerned.
1.3 If, subsequently, the people of any area outside Mercia wish constitutionally to become a part of the region, then this will be acceptable if Mercia is in favour of the union and providing that it will not lead to external antagonism or conflict.

ARTICLE 2 – THE POLITICAL SYSTEM
2.1 Upon the adoption of this Constitution, the political authorities of the United Kingdom functioning within Mercia will be constitutionally inferior to the political structures established by this Constitution and will be abolished by them as soon as is practicable.
2.2 The people of Mercia will be sovereign within the region and will be ultimately responsible for the maintenance and operation of its political system.
2.3 Mercia will operate politically as an organic democracy with regular folk, leet, hundred and shire meetings and a witan to co-ordinate the region’s activities. At all levels, these meetings will be empowered to elect and dismiss officers from amongst their members, whilst executive and administrative tasks will be rotated on a regular basis unless the members decide otherwise by consensus. All
decisions at all political levels will ideally be taken by the consensus of their members, but, in instances where this proves impossible, a fair system of voting, decided upon by the members concerned, must be used. To ensure the sovereignty of the people, all meetings will be conducted openly and all delegates and elected officers will be subject to replacement at any time.

2.4 At all tiers other than folk level, there will also operate research and advisory bodies made up of delegates and co-opted members. The function of these bodies will be to represent to their respective tiers the interests of posterity and thereby guide society away from short-term thinking.

2.5 The principle of subsidiarity will apply, whereby decisions will be taken at the most local appropriate political level and each level will have less power than, and be accountable to, that which elects it. The primary purpose of all political bodies beyond folk meetings will be co-ordinational, but their precise duties will be dependent upon the specific powers that their constituent units wish to allot to them, except for those particular powers already allocated by this Constitution. In addition, the avoidance of the duplication of functions will be the responsibility of all political units.

2.6 To enable a smooth transition from the current arrangements, the Witan will prepare a general scheme for the transfer of duties, powers, property and staff from the United Kingdom’s governing bodies, including local authorities, to the new institutions established under this Constitution. In framing this scheme, the Witan will be guided by the principle of subsidiarity and by local circumstances of geography or history that justify exceptions to the general distribution. The initial rearrangements will be capable of amendment at any time in accordance with local wishes.

2.7 The bedrock of the political system will be geographically-based, decision-making folk communities, which will encompass all the people of Mercia and will be formed by the voluntary combination of individuals. All members of such a community will be eligible to attend and participate in all folk meetings. A community must be based on an appropriately-sized, defined geographical area and consist of a large enough number of people to be essentially self-supporting, but be small enough for every member to know and be known by every other member. This community will have essential control and primary rights over its area, within the terms of this Constitution, and its boundaries will be agreed with its neighbours or determined by arbitration.

2.8 Leet, hundred and shire boundaries will follow historical precedents, where these exist, unless any of the constituent tiers disagree, in which case the issue will be put to arbitration.

2.9 Each political unit, other than the Witan, will be entitled to send recallable delegates to the next tier. Each area will be represented at the next tier broadly in proportion to its population. Where the exact proportion to population is impracticable, preference will be given to ensuring that whole and distinct communities are separately represented. The appropriate number of delegates to the next level will be decided by agreement or arbitration.
2.10 The political system outlined in this Constitution might not in practice cover every eventuality and it is possible that cross-linked parallel structures for different functions might emerge or need to be introduced. Therefore, all the political units at all the levels specifically referred to in this Article of the Constitution will be empowered to introduce such structures on the sole proviso that all actions taken and all structures created must be within the parameters permissible within this Constitution.

2.11 An individual who disagrees with community decisions arrived at by the political processes outlined in this Article will be free to appeal to the next political level, which will be empowered to act in an advisory capacity and offer the facility for reconciliation, and final appeal will be to the Witan. Where substantial numbers of people favour opposing or contradictory courses of action to those decided, their first obligation will be, with the aid of relevant advice, to seek an agreed solution. If this process should fail, a popular vote will be taken on the issue by those affected.

2.12 The people of Mercia, and most specifically the Witan on their behalf, will be ultimately responsible for the protection of the integrity of this Constitution, which may be amended only through the agreement of at least three quarters of the members of the Witan.

2.13 The Witan will be empowered to consult and negotiate with the lawful delegates and representatives of other regions and states, especially the English and Celtic ones, in order to achieve the harmonisation of constitutions, as far as is possible, but there will be no consequential alteration of the clauses of this Constitution except as is allowed according to the terms of this Constitution.

ARTICLE 3 – CITIZENSHIP

3.1 Upon the adoption of this Constitution, the people of Mercia will cease to be ‘subjects of the crown’ and instead will become citizens, with both rights and responsibilities. It will be the specific responsibility of each citizen to help to create a culture of good citizenship in order that the rights of all citizens will be protected without the need for the creation of a massive body of enforceable law. In addition, it will be the specific responsibility of all delegates and officers to foster that culture and to seek to overcome any physical or social barriers to active participation in community affairs.

3.2 Citizenship will be gained automatically by all the existing inhabitants of Mercia and thereafter through Mercian parentage.

3.3 All citizens will be guaranteed at least adequate supplies of water, food, fuel, clothing and housing, as of right and untied to any duties, but the local communities will be ultimately responsible for the welfare of their members, except in emergencies when the Witan will co-ordinate relief efforts.

3.4 All citizens will be expected to live in co-operative partnership with one another and should endeavour to participate actively in community affairs.
The granting of citizenship to outsiders will be a privilege and not a right. Mercia will not bestow citizenship on outsiders upon demand, not least because of the scale of its initial population problem. Outsiders will be able to request Mercian citizenship, but it will only be gained through the approval of the Witan and the community inhabiting the land where the applicant wishes to live.

ARTICLE 4 – THE LAW

4.1 This Constitution reaffirms the long-standing legal independence of Mercia and the paramount legal rights of the Mercian people, both within their communities and as individuals.

4.2 Upon the adoption of this Constitution, the legal system functioning within Mercia will be dissolved. All legislation and regulations introduced since 1066 that are not approved by the existing and new communities will have no legal validity. The communities will also be empowered to review and decide upon the suitability and feasibility of the application of the local customs and written laws of pre-Conquest Mercia to their own specific areas.

4.3 The Mercian communities will also hold the authority to establish their own new local customs and written laws within the terms of this Constitution, provided that they are constructed within humanitarian principles and do not adversely affect the ecological balance of the land. The communities will also be required to observe and adjudicate upon their own local customs and written laws.

4.4 The Witan will be responsible for the written codification of the various legal customs of Mercia after complete consultation and agreement with all the local communities.

4.5 The legal system will be decentralised, based on the fundamental principle of justice and required to operate efficiently.

4.6 The bedrock of the law will be the people of Mercia, who will be empowered to re-create and operate folk courts to serve their own communities. The communities will also have the authority and responsibility to co-operate in order to establish leet, hundred and shire courts, covering the same geographical areas as the equivalent political bodies, to which cases involving a wider geographical area can be referred and where appeals against the verdicts of more local courts can be heard. Final appeal, on constitutional grounds alone, will be to a Mercian regional court composed of a body of democratically elected law-speakers. There will be no further appeal outside Mercia.

4.7 All the law courts will operate independently from the political processes and entirely without interference from the political system, except as is allowed under the clauses of this Constitution.

4.8 Within the terms of this Constitution, the communities will be free to decide their own precise legal proceedings and, through co-operative discussions with each other, will determine the relative powers of, and the allocation of specific duties to, the various tiers of courts.

4.9 Access to justice will be free to all individuals and the costs of all legal proceedings will be met by the whole community. However, in the new
community-empowered Mercian society, all crimes will be regarded as acts against the community itself.

4.10 While the new laws and legal system are being approved by the Mercian people, observance of existing laws which do not contradict this Constitution will be considered legitimate.

ARTICLE 5 – LAND, PROPERTY AND WEALTH

5.1 Upon the adoption of this Constitution, crown ownership of the land of Mercia will be terminated and the land will be returned, as determined by the law courts, to the Mercian people, its rightful and legal holders, as folkland to be held by the community in perpetuity.

5.2 The newly-created Mercian courts will be empowered to examine the claims of the indigenous people to land, property and wealth confiscated from them by political and economic elites since the Norman Conquest, and to facilitate a redistribution accordingly. Nevertheless, the guiding principle of redistribution will be to enable the people to return to the land as communities, to subsist on it as far as possible and to develop an affection for it and its location.

5.3 The communities will be free to decide the balance between the common and private holdings of their land, property and wealth, but neither communities nor individuals will be permitted under the law to hold more land for whatever purpose than can be reasonably used according to human need. The maximum size of all land holdings will ultimately be decided according to local conditions by the law courts. All holdings agreed or judged to be beyond the maximum permitted level will be required to be surrendered to the common pool.

5.4 The communities will be required to provide common land for leisure, conservation and reclamation purposes, in addition to using their holdings to grow food and for industrial production, and they will also be required to release all land that is surplus to human needs into wilderness.

5.5 Guardianship, not ownership, will be the basis of all holdings and therefore individuals will not be free agents to dispose of land, property and wealth as they see fit. Instead, holding rights will automatically pass to the community and to families within each community, with the precise arrangements being decided according to the written laws and local customs of the specific community.

5.6 The new guardians of land, property and wealth will be required to use their holdings within ecological and humanitarian constraints, whilst any land that becomes derelict will automatically revert to the community.

ARTICLE 6 – POLICING

6.1 Upon the adoption of this Constitution, the state-controlled professional police force will be dissolved. It will ultimately be replaced by a series of interlinked self-policing communities, with responsibility for the full maintenance of respect for and observance of the law within their areas of concern.

6.2 During the transitional period, from state to full local control of policing, the communities will be at liberty to employ a small professional local police presence to ensure order. Any such force will operate within the parameters and
timescale decided upon by the Witan after full consultation with all relevant local communities. In the long term, all communities will act as tithings and elect a reeve to co-ordinate their self-policing activities.

6.3 All policing bodies will be required to operate in a fully lawful, open and accountable manner.

6.4 Arbitrary arrest will be illegal and no person in Mercia will be apprehended or detained against his/her wishes except as is permitted under this Constitution and by the various customs and written laws of the land.

ARTICLE 7 – THE PENAL SYSTEM

7.1 Upon the adoption of this Constitution, all penalties introduced in Mercia since 1066 that are not approved by the existing and new communities will have no legal validity. The communities will also be empowered to review and decide upon the suitability and feasibility of the application of the penalties of pre-Conquest Mercia to their own specific areas.

7.2 The Mercian penal system will be decentralised and stem from and be based upon individual and, especially, community rights and responsibilities.

7.3 The Mercian penal system will be based on a humanitarian approach to law-breakers and the compensation of injured parties, backed up by community service. Capital and corporal punishments will be entirely forbidden.

7.4 Within these confines, the individual communities will be empowered to develop their own systems of specific penalties in conjunction with their existing and new local customs and written laws. Nevertheless, these consequent penal systems will be required to harmonise with this Constitution and with the ecological balance of the land.

7.5 The punitive prison system, with its universities of crime, will be abolished upon the adoption of this Constitution. Continued use of secure accommodation will be allowed only for particular people who are determined by the courts to be a serious danger to open society or the environment. Even then, the main emphasis of any person’s removal from society will be on rehabilitation in a humane and purposeful environment, for the mutual benefit of the offender and the community.

ARTICLE 8 – THE ECONOMY AND TRADE

8.1 The economy of Mercia will become essentially subsistent and self-sufficient as soon as possible. Therefore, Mercia will become and remain a fundamentally sustainable bioregion with a steady-state economy, in which production and consumption will be based on ecological and human needs. The Witan will be empowered to devise and implement strategies permitted by this Constitution to achieve these objectives. Nevertheless, all the people of Mercia will be ultimately responsible for the successful application of these strategies.

8.2 Accordingly, all producers and traders will be obliged to operate within defined limits of scale, as precisely determined by the Witan after full consultation with the local communities. Although community ownership of productive and trading
enterprises will be encouraged, privately-owned co-operatives and companies which conform to the terms of this Constitution will be acceptable.

8.3 In addition to the absolute limits of scale applicable to all enterprises, the Witan, after full consultation with the local communities, will set tighter limits of scale beyond which enterprises must be organised on co-operative lines.

8.4 According to their size, whole firms, plants or areas within plants will form basic economic organisations and will be economically the equivalent of the folk communities. Decision-making structures beyond the basic economic organisation will observe the principle of subsidiarity. All economic organisations will be required to co-operate with the relevant political units and with each other in pursuit of agreed social and environmental goals.

8.5 Although a Mercian currency will be created under the guidance of the Witan, to circulate money within the regional economy, the people will be required to barter or exchange goods and services whenever possible, rather than carry out monetary transactions.

8.6 The concept ‘To each according to his/her need; from each according to his/her capacity’ will be applied, so that people currently owning large amounts of land, property and capital will be required by the law to surrender their unjustifiable wealth to the existing and new communities. In this way, a non-capitalist economic system will be constructed in which human activity will serve real human need.

8.7 The Witan will be empowered to implement the necessary trade measures, including the use of a nonconvertible currency, that give protection to the local economies of Mercia and enable them to flourish.

8.8 The Witan will also be empowered to regulate external trade so that such trade will exist only to top up non-regionally available basic needs.

8.9 This limited amount of external trade will be required to be conducted through barter, exchange and gift systems wherever possible, through Mercian currency if necessary and through an intermediary mechanism only to ensure absolutely essential trade.

8.10 During the period of transition, following Mercia’s autonomy from the United Kingdom, indirect taxation will be progressively cut to reduce the cost of living, wages and labour costs.

**ARTICLE 9 – WORK**

9.1 In Mercia, people will work in order to live, not live in order to work.

9.2 Nevertheless, all capable individuals, including children and elderly people, will have a responsibility to contribute to the collective economic pool, but it will be the responsibility of each community to ensure that all individuals fulfil their agreed and required tasks.

9.3 The communities will be empowered to formulate and issue written laws and codes of practice, which conform with the clauses of this Constitution, in order to prevent exploitation and to ensure safe and healthy working environments.

9.4 People who choose not to work in the formal economy of Mercia will still be obliged to contribute to the general economic good, either directly or indirectly.
9.5 The communities will be required to ensure that the work undertaken in their areas is useful, carried out near to the workers’ homes and, as far as is possible, creative, interesting and flexible.

9.6 The communities will also be required to ensure that the work undertaken in their areas is not antisocial nor seriously damaging to the environment, that it does not demean people’s lives and that individuals are not forced to carry out types of work that are abhorrent to them.

9.7 The communities will decide for themselves at folk meetings what rewards should be given to individuals who contribute more than is required and also how unpopular tasks might be carried out.

9.8 Work undertaken will not be rewarded by payments in money or tokens unless there is no alternative method of recompense possible.

**ARTICLE 10 – FINANCE**

10.1 The Mercian financial system will essentially be controlled by the local communities, which will be required to make their arrangements simple and easy to understand.

10.2 Mercian currency, issued by the Witan, will be available to facilitate those transactions unsuited to barter, exchange and gift systems.

10.3 The unsustainable and unethical practice of using money to make money will be illegal and financial enterprises will be limited in scale, as precisely determined by the Witan after full consultation with the local communities.

10.4 The raising and allocation of income for community purposes will be fundamentally decentralised, in the hands of local folk meetings.

10.5 Individuals will have the right to opt out of funding and participating in the cultural, educational, health, housing and social service provision within their communities, provided that they make no claim on the relevant communal resources.

10.6 Each tier within the political system will be responsible for the provision of funds to the next co-ordinational level in order to enable it to operate effectively, whilst the allotment of revenue for large-scale and geographically widespread projects and enterprises will require the joint agreement of all the political units concerned.

10.7 All political bodies will be required to base their financial policies on ecological factors, on the elimination of significant inequalities in the wealth of the people that they serve and on the provision of necessary community services.

10.8 The financial practices of all the political tiers will be monitored by the Witan, which will control an emergency fund, drawn from the communities, for use in times of crisis. Although all communities will be required to contribute to the emergency fund, the precise level of support will be decided by agreement between the Witan and the communities.

10.9 The application to Mercia of the United Kingdom’s national debt will be decided by the Witan after full consultation with the local communities.

**ARTICLE 11 – RESOURCES AND ENERGY**
11.1 The people of Mercia will have ultimate responsibility for the management of the resources of the region, including its territorial waters. Actual management will be decentralised in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity.

11.2 Mercia will follow a policy of resource conservation, with the use of raw materials being based on real need.

11.3 All the people of Mercia will be required to practise positive conservation strategies, which will include the use of sustainable farming methods to preserve the soil and its fertility, the replanting of trees to replace felled timber, the recycling of materials to extend their periods of usefulness, the manufacture of strong and durable products and the insulation of buildings.

11.4 All the people will be required to use renewable and non-polluting resources wherever possible.

11.5 The Witan will be required to support and promote appropriate research into increasing the efficiency of renewable and non-polluting resources and into investigating the alternatives of resource substitution.

11.6 The use of badly-polluting resources, as determined by the Witan after full consultation with the local communities, will be illegal.

11.7 The highly dangerous nuclear power industry will be unnecessary in Mercia and the Witan will be responsible for ensuring its elimination as quickly as is safe, as well as endeavouring to protect the region from radioactive danger emanating from other regions.

11.8 The communities will be required to manage their own local fuel and raw materials as far as is possible, although the political units at all levels will be responsible for resource distribution to areas within Mercia suffering from scarcities.

11.9 The communities will be ultimately responsible for controlling pollution within their areas. Nevertheless, the specific polluter will be required to pay for any damage caused to the environment.

ARTICLE 12 – AGRICULTURE

12.1 Agriculture will be put back into the hands of the Mercian people through a redistribution of the land, as determined by the law courts.

12.2 The communities of Mercia will be fundamentally responsible for feeding themselves and will be required to carry out agricultural production primarily for local consumption. They will also be responsible for the implementation and preservation of infinitely sustainable agricultural systems based on organic methods, which will not deplete the soil and will enable Mercia to become and remain self-sufficient in healthy foodstuffs. Furthermore, the communities will be required to ensure that they adopt farming systems which enhance the diversity of habitats.

12.3 The communities will be free to trade within Mercia local agricultural surpluses for other essential commodities in short supply.

12.4 The political units at all levels will be responsible for the co-ordination of the collection, transportation and distribution of remaining farming surpluses, which can be used to counteract food shortages elsewhere in Mercia, to trade for
necessary imports and to help support the nutritional needs of more barren neighbouring regions.

12.5 Inflicting cruelty upon farm animals, exploiting agricultural workers, polluting the land and marketing unhealthy foodstuffs will be illegal.

**ARTICLE 13 – INDUSTRY**

13.1 Industry will be redistributed into the hands of the communities, as determined by the law courts.

13.2 All industrial enterprises will be obliged to operate within defined limits of scale, as precisely determined by the Witan after full consultation with the local communities, and all producers will be required principally to supply local needs, within the ecological constraints of the region. Small-scale co-operative industrial units and individual creative craft industries will be supported in principle.

13.3 Because of the many disadvantages of hi-tech, the use of sophisticated technology will be reviewed. If found to be of genuine human and environmental benefit, it will be allowed.

13.4 All industries will be required to produce strong, durable and well-made goods, but the political units at all levels will be required to ensure that the maintenance, repair and recycling of products will be emphasised above the manufacture of new ones.

13.5 The communities will be free to trade within Mercia local industrial surpluses for other essential commodities in short supply.

13.6 Heavy industry and mass production methods will only be acceptable if, in the view of the Witan, a clear and vital need is indicated, but all anti-communal and essentially anti-ecological industrial activities will be illegal.

13.7 All industries will be required to convert to renewable and fundamentally non-polluting resources as quickly as is feasible and categorically within the time-scale set by the Witan following a thorough review of the situation, which it will be required to undertake in conjunction with the communities. Following the expiry of the time limit, the specific polluter will be held entirely responsible for and made to pay the full cleanup costs of any damage done to the environment by the offending industry.

13.8 The exploitation by industry of people, animals and the land will be illegal.

13.9 All tiers of the political system will be empowered to act as regulatory bodies with the power to enforce the terms of this Constitution upon offending industries.

**ARTICLE 14 – TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS**

14.1 The transport network will be based primarily on local needs and use and the communities will be essentially responsible for the provision of their own communications systems.

14.2 Nevertheless, to the extent that the people are willing to finance it, the Witan will co-ordinate the creation and maintenance of an integrated public transport and communications system based on Mercia’s need and not on greed. The Witan will also be required to work with the other English and Celtic regions to create an overall integrated transport system for the British Isles.
14.3 The Mercian transport system will revolve around sustainable energy-efficient forms of relatively unpolluting transport, such as bicycles, horses, trains, trams and water-borne vessels, but the Witan will be required to spearhead investigations into the potential of alternative environmentally-friendly modes of transport, with a view to their introduction as soon as is feasible.

14.4 All transport and communications enterprises will be obliged to operate within defined limits of scale, as precisely determined by the Witan after full consultation with the local communities.

14.5 The owners of polluting vehicles will be held entirely legally responsible for any damage that they cause to the environment.

**ARTICLE 15 – POPULATION**

15.1 The population of Mercia will be required to be reduced to and then sustained at a level at which, without damaging the ecosystem, the food production of the region is physically capable of supporting that number of people; where all the people are able to enjoy a fulfilling life with plentiful personal space; which gives spare capacity for the absorption of genuine refugees and asylum seekers and which still enables there to be large areas of wilderness.

15.2 The people of Mercia themselves will be responsible for the achievement of these objectives and needs and the political system will not be allowed to introduce oppressive policies concerning family size, mobility or immigration.

15.3 The political system will not be empowered to introduce compulsory means to control the population, but the size of the population in a community will be the moral and legal responsibility of that community, which will be required to keep its numbers within limits that prevent encroachment on neighbouring communities. In the short term, the Witan, following discussions with all relevant political units, will set agreed population level targets for all communities and areas within Mercia.

15.4 The Witan will be required, within the confines of this Constitution, to seek to harmonise the population policies of Mercia with those of other regions, especially the surrounding ones, and to act positively in inter-regional initiatives to resolve political and economic problems that may cause major population growth and movements.

**ARTICLE 16 – URBAN AREAS**

16.1 The rights of all people to live in the communities, rural or urban, which suit them will be respected, but the political units will be empowered to implement planning law to favour appropriate rural developments, which minimise or, preferably, eliminate commuting.

16.2 All towns and cities will be required to become and remain fundamentally self-sufficient integrated urban-rural units well able to supply their own essential food needs within their existing boundaries. The Witan, following discussions with all relevant political units, will set agreed completion targets for this process that all urban communities will be obliged to meet.
16.3 The communities will be empowered to take over unused and derelict land, cleanse it if necessary and restore it to its most appropriate condition, such as farmland, woodland, ecologically-managed areas and wilderness.
16.4 Although the communities will be empowered to demolish buildings, particularly high-rise and badly-polluting properties, they will only be permitted to do so after full consultation and agreement with the local people concerned.

**ARTICLE 17 – SOCIAL STRUCTURE**

17.1 A new society, based on community responsibilities and rights and bonded by affinity and togetherness, will be created in Mercia.
17.2 Society will be required to be egalitarian and the opportunity for personal development will be available by law to all people regardless of creed, sex, age, appearance, ethnic or economic background or personal ability.
17.3 All people will be entirely free to express their personalities and differences within the parameters imposed by the needs of society and the environment and within the confines of this Constitution.
17.4 All members of society will be legally equal and the communities will be specifically required to uphold the rights and ensure the responsible actions of all their members and to act as caring societies within the co-operative whole.

**ARTICLE 18 – COMMUNITY**

18.1 Community will be a cornerstone of Mercian society. Although community largely needs to be re-created, the political system will not be empowered to legislate in order to achieve this, but the people will be enabled, under this Constitution, to develop their own folk communities and style of community in essentially nonviolent ways.
18.2 A redistribution of land, property and wealth, as determined by the law courts, will enable new co-operative farming communities to evolve.
18.3 A geographical community forming a basic political unit will have essential control and primary rights over its agreed area or that allocated to it by the law courts, within the terms of this Constitution.
18.4 All communities will be required to encourage loyalty and freedom, bonding and sharing, and co-operation and individual creativity.
18.5 All communities will be required to ensure that their members have both rights and responsibilities, at minimum those prescribed under this Constitution.
18.6 All communities will be held responsible for the behaviour and actions of all their members, but will also be fundamentally responsible for their welfare.

**ARTICLE 19 – CULTURE**

19.1 The culture which emerges in Mercia is likely to reflect the diversity of the present population and the political system will not be empowered to legislate in an attempt to define or steer cultural development.
19.2 Therefore, the culture of the region will be shaped by an organic process, growing out of former events, being moulded by present events and being passed on to the future to be further developed.
Nevertheless, the education system will hold the primary responsibility for the rebuilding of the links between the geographical region of Mercia and its history, especially by emphasising that Mercian culture is rooted in the land.

Despite this, all cultural groups will be allowed to preserve all aspects of their culture that do not contravene Mercian laws.

The communities will recognise the validity of rules, which are compatible with this Constitution, that members of a cultural group agree between themselves, but will uphold the right of individuals to withdraw from that culture, with the full protection of Mercian law.

Subsidies will be withdrawn from bureaucracies maintaining aloof and consumer-based types of culture.

ARTICLE 20 – HEALTH

The fundamental emphasis of Mercian health policy will be on prevention rather than cure.

Health will be both a personal and a collective responsibility in Mercia. The education system will be required to help people to understand the foundations of good health and what actions are supportive of or detrimental to health. Each person and community will then have the responsibility to act on this knowledge.

The people overall and the political system in particular will be responsible for the re-creation and sustentation of a healthy environment where good personal health can easily flourish.

Health services will be community-based, democratically-controlled, holistic in perspective and fundamentally decentralised, but their creation, level of operation and continuation will be entirely dependent on the willingness of the people to finance and support such facilities.

Access to health care will not be dependent on the possession of money, primarily because the levelling principle will be applied to material wealth, whilst drug companies will be prevented from operating as capitalist concerns through constitutional restrictions on the scale of enterprises, as precisely determined by the Witan after full consultation with the local communities.

The political units will not be empowered to favour nor advantageously fund any specific medical approach or activity. However, they will be responsible, as part of their environmental watchdog role, for the control of harmful drugs and the monitoring of the effects of medical treatments.

The welfare of the people will be vested primarily in the local communities and kin and kith groups and not with social services specialists.

ARTICLE 21 – HOUSING

The communities will be empowered to take the ultimate decisions on housing matters concerning their own areas, within the parameters of this Constitution, but the legal appeal procedure will be available to people who disagree with community decisions.
21.2 The communities will be responsible for the renovation of empty properties to help to solve short-term housing shortages and the redistribution of wealth and property will make more accommodation available to homeless people.

21.3 In the long run, the reduced and sustainable population of Mercia will put less pressure on the amount of housing stock required and all individuals and communities will be responsible for the careful maintenance of existing properties within their own areas to protect the land from further encroachment.

21.4 The builders of all new dwellings will be required to construct sturdy, resource-efficient, well-insulated and harmonised properties. Wherever possible, these dwellings will be constructed from local materials and designed to minimise pollution. In addition, the construction of high-rise buildings will be discouraged.

21.5 Through constitutional restraints and local community financial and economic controls, the scale of enterprises will be restricted and therefore house owners will be free from the clutches of capitalist financiers and building companies.

ARTICLE 22 – EDUCATION

22.1 Education is a fundamental human need and therefore will be freely available to all the people of Mercia.

22.2 The communities will be primarily responsible for their own democratically-organised educational provision, although the extent of this will be entirely dependent on the degree of willingness of the local people to finance and support it.

22.3 The community education system will be required to encourage the development of all individuals towards the common good.

22.4 All formally organised and funded learning will be required to be co-operative, creative, holistic in nature and, wherever possible, based on self-motivation and self-discipline.

22.5 All educational tutors will be required to act as facilitators, guiding individuals and small groups of students to active learning through encouragement, and not as teachers of a series of stodgy and conformist facts and opinions to large classes by instruction and enforcement.

22.6 Educational selection, grading and discrimination are antisocial activities and consequently will not be permitted. Therefore, competitive examinations and competitive testing will cease to exist.

22.7 Notwithstanding the importance of diversity in the education system, the communities will be required to ensure that the ecology and history of Mercia and the fundamentals of good health are main strands in all curricula because of their essential significance to the new society.

22.8 All educational institutions will be required to be appropriately sized and accessible to the whole community, whilst some may be used essentially for advanced learning where the communities are willing to provide the funds.

ARTICLE 23 – RELIGION

23.1 There will be no official religion nor advantaged creed in Mercia.
23.2 Freedom of worship will be allowed for all religious groups which operate within
the law and under this Constitution.
23.3 There will be no discrimination by political units or economic organisations on
grounds of religion or absence of religion.

**ARTICLE 24 – THE ENVIRONMENT**
24.1 The protection of the environment is a cornerstone of this Constitution.
24.2 All the people of Mercia will be responsible for the reversal of the process of
ecological damage in the region, as far as is possible; for the re-creation and
maintenance of a healthy physical environment; for assisting the renewal of
considerable amounts of appropriate wilderness; for helping to increase the
diversity of native species; for the reintroduction of indigenous animals; for
encouraging the growth of appropriate natural vegetation and for restoring
hedgerows where suitable.
24.3 The communities will carry ultimate responsibility for the development,
management, harvesting and protection of their own environments and they will
be required to ensure that their farms, industries and transport systems are
essentially non-polluting and that materials are recycled wherever possible.
24.4 Any individual who causes or attempts to cause damage to the environment will
be subject to the appropriate penal sanctions.
24.5 The Witan will be responsible for the integration of Mercia’s environmental
programmes into a global environmental strategy designed to safeguard the
physical and biological integrity of the global ecosystem. The Witan will also be
required to pursue energetically inter-regional environmental co-operation and to
ensure that Mercia’s environmental policies at no time compromise agreed global
policies, except as far as the latter contradict the terms of this Constitution.

**ARTICLE 25 – ANIMALS**
25.1 All the people of Mercia will be responsible for the restoration and preservation
of natural habitats to enable a wide diversity of species to flourish and for the
reintroduction and expansion of indigenous species in the region.
25.2 The animals of Mercia will fundamentally have the right to lead natural and
healthy lives relatively free from human interference.
25.3 The slaughter and transportation of animals for food, clothing and medical
reasons alone will be permissible and then only within extremely stringent
conditions which will require proof of real need and value.
25.4 Sports, circuses and entertainments involving the misuse of animals will cease to
be legal and the ownership of animal products derived from endangered species
will be prohibited. Also, interference in the natural selection and evolution of
species will be illegal.
25.5 The individual communities will be empowered to create their own specific local
customs and written laws relating to animals, but these will be required to act in
harmony with this Constitution.
25.6 The communities will be required to introduce strict penalties, as permitted by
this Constitution, to deal with all cases of cruelty to animals.
25.7 All citizens will hold the right to keep domestic animals as pets, provided that they accept responsibility for their care and for ensuring that their animals do not cause danger or nuisance.

ARTICLE 26 – EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

26.1 Mercia will hold no territorial claims outside the shires which will initially constitute the region and therefore will not station any armed units on foreign soil.
26.2 Mercia will recognise the right of all peoples to pursue their own forms of democracy.
26.3 The Witan will be required to undertake an immediate review of all treaty rights and obligations inherited by Mercia from the United Kingdom and empowered to renegotiate or revoke them if necessary or desirable.
26.4 The Witan will be ultimately responsible for Mercian foreign policy, but will be required to carry out its duties within a spirit of co-operation, whenever possible, and to encourage the adoption of common ecological and humanitarian goals, attitudes and values.
26.5 It will also be the responsibility of the Witan to help to preserve the security of Mercia and its people by ensuring that the region takes an active part in global affairs and does not become isolated.
26.6 The Witan will be further responsible for the development and promotion of Mercia as a respected and valued region and a trusted peace broker actively involved in the nonviolent solution of international disputes.
26.7 The Witan will be required to ensure that Mercia is at the forefront of the effective international monitoring and management of the common global environment.
26.8 The Witan will also be required to work actively for the establishment of both an English and an Anglo-Celtic Confederation, as a vital step to security and co-operation, and for the creation of a common position by the Confederations on external affairs.
26.9 Furthermore, the Witan will be required to work actively towards the establishment of a new system of harmonised international law based on justice, organic democracy, communalism and holistic practices, as well as a new-style United Nations of the regions.

ARTICLE 27 – EUROPE

27.1 The Witan will be required to support the natural evolution of a “Europe of Circles” based on a close association of regions with strong commonality. Accordingly, the Witan will be responsible for the development of harmonious relationships, particularly with our immediate neighbours.
27.2 The specific nature of Mercia’s relationship with the European Union will be determined by the Witan after full consultation with the local communities.

ARTICLE 28 – DEFENCE

28.1 As an essentially self-sufficient and peaceful region, Mercia will be non-threatening to other regions and states and thus will not invite pre-emptive attack,
whilst the decentralisation of society will make the region extremely difficult to conquer and control.

28.2 In addition, Mercia will rely heavily on its co-operative foreign policy as the first line of defence and the Witan will be required to work actively for the creation of a new-style United Nations of harmonious regions with the power to take action against aggressive and irresponsible states.

28.3 As a priority, the Witan will be responsible for the instigation and co-ordination of investigations into nonviolent defensive strategies, with a view to introducing them ultimately as the main strand of the region’s resistance policy to foreign aggression.

28.4 However, to help to protect Mercia in the immediate world of competition, aggression and devastating weaponry, the Witan will be responsible for the development and co-ordination of effective least-force defensive strategies.

28.5 Nevertheless, the security of Mercia will ultimately be the responsibility of the people themselves. Consequently, all citizens will be offered training in the use of effective least-force defensive techniques and in methods of nonviolent resistance. The concept of the fyrd will be re-established, whereby all the people of Mercia will be legally required to resist entirely any foreign intervention in the region, but with the least force necessary to expel the aggressors.

28.6 All professional standing military forces located within Mercia and loyal to the British crown will be disbanded immediately this Constitution is adopted.

28.7 Any additional defensive force will be raised only with the consent of the citizens and will have a pledged loyalty to the people and the land of Mercia. Any such force will be limited in size and scope by the approval of the Witan and to the extent that the communities are willing to provision it.

28.8 All nuclear, chemical and biological weapons on Mercian soil will be immediately dismantled and rendered harmless as soon as possible. Their existence in Mercia will be illegal under this Constitution and the Witan will be required to campaign vigorously for their eradication from the globe. Consequently, the Witan will be responsible for negotiating the withdrawal of Mercia from NATO as rapidly as is practicable.

28.9 The sale of arms will be prohibited under this Constitution.

28.10 The Witan will be required to endeavour to evolve common defensive strategies with Mercia’s English, Celtic and European neighbours. The Witan will also be required to investigate the feasibility of combining defensive forces in crisis situations and, preferably, to pursue actively its practical implementation.
GLOSSARY

FOLKLAND: Folkland in Anglo-Saxon England was the land which had been occupied by the English settlers and was essentially held in perpetuity by families, communities and tribes, according to the custom of folkright.

FOLK-MOOT: The Anglo-Saxon village communities had essential authority within the law over their local area and held folk-moots (meetings) in which all free people (the vast majority, if not all, of the villagers) were entitled to participate.

FYRD: The fyrd was the army in Anglo-Saxon England and in theory was the people in arms because it was composed of all freemen. Each English region, including Mercia, had its own fyrd, which was mustered to meet crises only with the consent of the folk-moot and the length of service was limited by the law.

HUNDRED: As the Anglo-Saxon settlements coalesced over time into sizable regions, such as Mercia, there developed several layers of political co-ordination. These included the hundreds, subdivisions of each shire, which also operated law courts that administered justice within their areas and were part of the appeal system.

LAW-SPEAKER: Anglo-Saxon law was largely based on unwritten local customs, created and enforced by the communities, which probably appointed law-speakers to remember the laws and recite them regularly at public gatherings.

LEET: The Anglo-Saxon hundreds in East Anglia, and probably elsewhere, were divided into leets, which consisted of several villages and therefore formed an intermediate political and legal tier between the villages and the hundreds.

REEVE: A reeve was an Anglo-Saxon officer, who most commonly served a local area, although some reeves had wider functions, for example, the shire-reeve (or sheriff), who was the official responsible for the organisation of a shire.

SHIRE: A shire was the Anglo-Saxon term for the geographical area in England today known as a county and consisted of a number of hundreds. The shire operated as both a political and a legal unit, with a shire-moot and a shire court.
**TITHING:** In Anglo-Saxon England, freemen became organised into tithings (groups of households), in which every member was answerable for the good conduct of all his fellow members. Tithings were also responsible for the pursuit and arrest of criminals.

**WITAN:** The Witan was the powerful Anglo-Saxon council, which elected, advised and deposed kings, settled important disputes, created and helped to codify law and took decisions on foreign policy, political appointments, finance and land grants.