Design summary:

Aim: To provide a structured space where apprentices doing the Permaculture diploma could share their designs

Context: I took 3 years to complete my diploma and was awarded it in October 2019. It came at a time in my life when I didn't have so many demands and was able to focus on it quite intensively – which included making sure I met up with friends to discuss the designs! These were such stimulating times that I wondered if it was possible to design something that could meet that need on a more organised basis for others who perhaps didn't have the time or weren't located that closely to many other apprentices.

Framework: CEAP

Tools: Sector analysis, Zoning, Personal Skill audit, PMI (of my diploma experience) (These tools are only briefly explored here).

Principles: Holmgren

Key Learnings about the process: CEAP simple and useful model. Aha moment using sector analysis in this context. If writing up is part of the process, I deliberately left it quite sketchy rather than doing it in full (eg no depth to the principles) in order to make it easier to read. (I would be willing to fill in any gaps verbally.) The result when looking at the designs is that it's 'plan' heavy. Sharing the design in this format seems fairly clear but I would like other's perspectives on that. CEAP lacks space to evaluate the plan at the end so I added a section and also a next steps section.

Key Learnings about myself: I was invigorated by drawing my different skills together, reminded of the benefits of thinking holistically even on a personal level. I was also quite nervous about launching it and had a few crisis of confidence that it wouldn't work or other's wouldn't like it. (Note to self: Add threshold crossing to design trap list.) Working through this I was resolved to accept that that might happen and that I'd learnt loads through the process.

Design Solution:

Diploma Design Forum

1 hour (online)
     Welcome
     Go round – name etc.
     2 min – learning/ inspiration slot
     10 mins – Design share
     Group Go around with comments / reflects to the designer
     Designer responds
     Group Go around
     Designer responds
     Closing thoughts / takeaways

1 hour (offline) work on own design (optional)

30 mins (online) check in for those who want (optional)

Post implementation comments:

Some comments from participants:
'Thank you very much Carla for organising these group sessions, every session was an inspiration and food for creativity, skill sharing and in such excellent company. It was truly a memorable experience and it has propelled me forward into my next designs.'

'I truly felt touched and honoured to be able to share and learn in this cohort, skilfully facilitated and content rich stacking functions, multiplying yields and turning challenges into solutions all the way.'

'The Design Forum offers a wonderful way to present your designs and receive feedback from a healthy mix of perspectives (there is no obligation to do so). Experiencing the design process of other students was a rare privilege. I found it an invaluable source of ideas, links, references and inspiration.'

'The format is inclusive and relaxed, it is structured but retains a lovely sense of informality.'

CEAP**: Collect data**

Observations
- DWG (diploma working group) discussions around encouraging / facilitating completion
- DWG concerns about learning gaps post PDC courses
- Feedback from non-completes suggests that the lack of time to commit is a big issue
- (from PMI) My own experience of the support sources whilst doing the diploma, what were the good things I experienced, can I facilitate those for others?
- Discussions about bridging the gap between pdc and diploma
- (from Personal skills audit) Review of courses I've done that reference good models for motivation, creativity/ coaching, organisation
- Observation of own motives: desire to use my own creativity and coaching skills / possibility of earning some money in a positive way / desire to see positive, confident permaculturalists and a better earth as a consequence
- Observation of zones: 00, 0, 1 key zones and the flow between the zones at different phases in the design process (including write up and presenting)
- Feedback collected at my own presentation on flow and motivation at the diploma gathering in Hebden. (This also brought up a lot of discussion around 'how to write up design' and what 'is' a good design, what does it need to include.)
- Financials: I read some recompense for my time and the association can't afford to pay me. What might be a fair fee? Costs: Do PA need a fee to advertise it? Zoom costs?
- Sectors:
  / cold spots, hot spots e.g. Frame of mind, encouraged, discouraged
  / movement of people through diploma?
  / sun eg personal aha moments, when, where, how can they be captured
  / wind eg wind breaks, barriers to completing and developing ones own designs, capturing the energy to work on a design

CE**AP: Evaluate**
- Solution needs to be time focused and limited (quite structured) but also have some flexibility about it (none of us have unlimited time).
- Solution needs to be location unlimited so that those who need it can access it (diploma done by students globally, which makes on-line the most practical solution).
- Cost could be an incentive to participate? Can't be expensive, most people have limited means. Needs also to be quite simple to deliver so that it can be kept at a fair fee.
- Needs to be generative, make sure feedback collection is designed in.
- Can the zone be extended out? How to reach a wider audience? Some feedback notes provided for the diploma email group? Facebook group?
- Online can exclude the 'quiet ones' how to make sure everyone has a voice and no 'one' can dominate?
- Personal flow research - how and why and where we flow is often intuitive and therefore hidden, how to make visible what is hidden. Reflective shared space for feedback can reveal to us what we don't know we know!
- Can be a model for local groups to adopt
- Make it relevant to all levels of diploma and beyond to anyone wanting to improve their designs.
- For trust and respectful sharing and feedback, clear contracting needs to be set by the group at the start. Commitment therefore needed for a period of time. Model of coaching e.g. questions rather than answers / 'perhaps consider' rather than 'should' / clean language
- Online requires internet and electronic device. Can still be exclusive. Impact of other people in shared spaces during session.
- Looking at sectors: personal questionnaire might be useful as part of signup

CE**A**P: **Apply permaculture principles**

Key principles:
- Creatively use and respond to change
- Observe and interact
- Catch and store energy
- Accept feedback
- Integrate

Ethics:
People care through support for participators and co-ordinator, earth care through Internet low resource, fair share online everyone can participate (is there anyone who is excluded? No internet? No computer?) may not suit everyone i.e. Personal preference that resists the structure.

CE**A**P: **(Proposed) Plan**

Initial idea: 2 online discussion groups:
Members fill in questionnaire prior to participation in group (to be designed)

1. Diploma Practical Outputs or applying PDC to a Permaculture diploma or... ? (title?)

2.5 hour online session
Max 20 members

Evening or daytime (can have a couple running concurrently) members can swap if there is space or join as an observer if there isn't.
1st session would need to be slightly adapted to discuss
- boundaries/contract e.g. Timings / listening to one another / confidentiality
- topics for discussion

Structure:
1 hour (online):
Welcome
Go round: eg name / location / stage in diploma etc
10 min - education slot: shared by group member (topics proposed at start of 10 weeks and volunteer presentation) topics might include a design model, soil, sociocracy, financial models, etc
20 mins - members share: how has that topic been used in a design? How would they like to use it? Questions for the group? What we're each taking away and what we're going to concentrate on for the next hour
Conclusions / questions / sign off before personal study.

1 hour – personal study working on our own designs (Offline)

30 minutes – check-in (online)
what have we achieved? What is the next task?
opportunity for other's input e.g. You may be interested to look at a design by ... , this book... may assist you, I found it helpful doing... etc. No 'shoulds'
closing, AOB, see you next week!

2. Online guild? Diploma design feedback group? (Title?)

10 weeks
Max 10 participants (9, so facilitator can be part of the group?)
1 hour (Online)
Evening or day and interchangeable like the other group but can't mix and match the different sort of groups.
Welcome
Go round – intro from each member (as in other group)
Design share from 1 member (10 mins).
1 minute (ish) input from each member of their best thought from what they've heard.
Designer responds to what they've heard
Go round for each further best thought
Designer gives final summary/ what they're taking away.
Closing circle what each person taking from the session
Close / goodbye / who's sharing next time?

Fee: Scaled? Fixed?
Comparative activities?
Standard tutor hour £30

Monitoring processes:

Have link to feedback questionnaire after each session
Invite an observer to observe the co-ordinator at some point (they wouldn't participate but would be introduced and their role explained) to be discussed with possible observer.

Next stages:
- A pilot group to test
- Some research to see what fee could be charged
- Present to diploma weekend away for feedback and possible pilot?

Feedback from the pilot group

1. An enjoyable and inspiring experience
2. The design forum was more popular as a format that the Learning forum. And some people didn't need (or want) their own working hour at that time.
3. There was a suggestion to give feedback during the session (through a questionnaire) that could be specifically related to the criteria needed for the permaculture diploma.
4. More people wanted to share a design than a learning topic
5. People didn't want to commit to too many sessions – 6 seemed about optimal
6. A combined 4:2 design:learning was suggested if there were 6 sessions in a series.
7. People were happy to pay something if they were able.

8. Participant numbers – 6 good, 9 maybe a bit large?
9. Suggestion to have a facebook group (Personal wariness because of the time it could take to manage and how it might exclude some people – although it sounds a good format for sharing).
10. The 10 min length of time for the presentation was commented on a few times as being too short and the design session did last a bit longer with there being fewer people for feeding back.

<u>Post pilot – next thoughts:</u>

Participant numbers – 20 in these formats is too many, maximum 10 people with a preference closer to 6.

Participants understanding of the process – This wasn't as easy as I anticipated. Revealed a group would need to gel and work together to make best use of the process. As a result, perhaps there would need to be a rolling program for a new group to be introduced to it as observers at the end of a series of sessions?

Feedback questionnaire – a suggestion was made to have each member fill in a questionnaire for the person sharing the design that looks at the key elements required at the diploma assessment. This could be a future consideration.

Fee – since writing the design, CV19 has brought about lockdown. Money is much more precarious for many people as a result (including myself). There is also a lot more admin involved than I anticipated.
    Direct costs involved: zoom: £15 per month. Assumed no 'advertising fee' from association as they offered to promote it. Conversations with group seemed that £60 / £42 / £25 were good levels to set (with an option to choose another amount).

Edits to the format – following the trial and comments the design was revamped and the 2 sessions combined to become one.

FINAL PLAN
<u>New design format proposal</u>

Diploma Design Forum

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        Group Go around
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EVALUATION
Observations after 6 sessions with Cohort 1 (April – May 2020) (nearly all were part of the trial group)
- Group included new starters, old returners and long time tutor
- Everyone nervous about sharing a design (as I had been too when launching this) and some needed a bit of a 'push' from the group (even the tutor).
- Everyone commented on the fact that they got LOADS out of the experience
- Whatever state of mind people arrived in they all left with positive enthusiasm
- Not many people used the off line hour to do their designs
- Different people came to the check-in session each week and talked in general about how their designs and diploma was going. It was more relaxed and less structured. It seemed helpful to have the flexibility for people to have more of a 'weekly' check-in rather than it be focused on that previous hour's own learning time.
- A surprising amount of information harvested from the chat on zoom too.

Next steps (June 2020)
   -    Launch a monthly group
   -    Recruit for another weekly group
   -    Have a taster session
   -    Maybe have a system of recording the notes there and then for people to read back and for people who couldn't make the session to see
   -    Have a better file sharing system so that participants can put their design shares directly in the folders and others can make edits if they want to
   -    Complete the tutor training and do the assessment training to keep my learning at the highest standard to share with the groups.
   -    Celebrate its success!!!