

# Annual Review 2021-2022



Photo courtesy of Fran Lant

Proud to be community owned





## Chairperson's Report

We had a turbulent start to 2021, as we all went into lock down and social distancing for several

months. We had to close down many of our activities here at Fordhall, including Arthur's Farm Kitchen, the yurts and school visits.

But even during that time, Fordhall was a safe haven for many, coming here for

exercise, benefiting from the green space, the beautiful landscape and environment. Often enjoying the free farm trails and the lovely picnic area in their family bubbles.

Charlotte and the team have done an amazing job throughout, managing through covid restrictions and social distancing. The team has worked flexibly and responded incredibly well to the changing situation, restarting activities as and when we could. Through everyone's hard work here at Fordhall we have come through the pandemic in a strong position, with all our core activities now thriving and we have many new initiatives to share with you.

Before we come onto that, you are all aware and would expect, Health and Safety for all our staff, volunteers and visitors is a priority for us. It is therefore important, that as a Board we report on it. We had a total of 8 minor accidents or near misses last year. These are all discussed at the quarterly board meetings along with any follow-on actions and recommendations. We have updated our Health and Safety Policy this year and our external Health and Safety Audit has just been carried out. The feedback from that is very positive and constructive.

The pandemic and the stormy times we are all still living through, with the cost-of-living crisis and an unprecedented war in Ukraine, have brought us all much sadness. It has also sharpened our thinking about what is important to us and our families; caring for others, for our environment and the community.

Since the pandemic, our appreciation of healthy food, well-being and being closer to nature, has been heightened. We see the links and connectedness between health, the land

and soil. We want to help bring about change, encourage a healthy planet and nurture resilience within people and communities. We articulate this through our mission statement and by living by our values in everything we do.

**Mission Statement:**  
By restoring connections between hearts, minds and the soil, we will encourage and create meaningful change, which helps build health and resilience within people and planet.

### Appeal for Change

You may remember we had three main themes for last year's Appeal for Change, which are all embedded in FCLI's strategic aims:

1. To build **Compassion** for each other and nature.
2. To nurture **Connections** between our health, nourishing food and the soil.
3. To grow our **Collaboration** with other organisations, to encourage more land into community ownership and to share our values and approach.

Through the Appeal in 2020 we raised an amazing £28,000. At last year's AGM, shareholders discussed and presented their view of how the money donated should be spent.

A high level of interest was in engagement that generates new supporters, particularly younger people through education linked

channels.

Also, on building partnerships with external organisations and developing our social prescribing model. The Climate Emergency was also a top priority.

Unfortunately, the continued lock-downs hindered the progression of this work in 2021, but we have now built capacity to enable us to deliver our Appeal for Change work in 2022.

We now have a Community Lead. We have created a new, full time, 6-month position for an Education and Engagement Officer. We also have a Residential Lead, building relationships with schools, scouts and youth groups.

We are all looking forward to seeing The Welcome Shed in the forthcoming year too. Funded through our Appeal for Change, this will be a central hub of information for all things at Fordhall, allowing us to give a warm welcome to every visitor.

We expect most of our Appeal for Change work to be completed during 2022 and 2023.

### **Working through Covid**

It was great to have our school visits back in 2021. We aim to be working with 2 dozen schools by the Summer 2022, returning to pre-pandemic levels. It's been lovely for children to be free to run around, make dens, enjoy learning about our livestock and wildlife and about food produce and natural crafts.

Our Care Farm has continued to be extremely popular with demand outstripping the availability of the service; providing health, social and educational care services through supervised horticultural work for adults with learning disabilities.

In a similar vein, the Youth Project has been over-subscribed as we see the impact of Covid and demand for alternative services increase dramatically. Vulnerable young people are referred to us from local secondary schools, local authorities and care agencies. We build trust with these young people by working on

practical tasks in small groups. We empower them, we build their confidence, and we grow their resilience by giving them the ability to lead the conservation and maintenance work on site.

Making good use of the new Greenwood Shelter, the young people have made their own benches out of reclaimed pellets, as well as a new table made from an old cable reel. Recently one young man earned three accredited certificates through the AQA Award scheme, helping him towards college and job applications in the future.

*"I am well proud of myself for getting these awards"*

*"My parents are proud of me too."*

I am delighted to announce that following the uncertainty of funding in 2021, we have secured a further three years of funding for the Youth Project, from BBC Children in Need and from the National Lottery Community Fund.

After the success of our Afternoon Amble in 2020 - supporting isolated people within our community - we committed to self-financing this work in 2021. This work continues today, as we try to build the social prescribing model through our Appeal for Change work. It is a relatively new process in Shropshire, so we are learning and developing new processes in conjunction with relative agencies and GPs. We have invested specific resource in this area for 2022, to encourage its growth



One of our young people building a chair from pallets



Entertaining children in our woods with nature stories

and success. The aim is that it will become common practice for a GP to prescribe a social session, as an alternative to, or in combination with medical intervention.

### **Our community events have been so successful, providing a lovely combination of fun and education.**

Some of the large events have included Picnic with the Lambs, outdoor theatre, Pumpkin Foraging and Halloween Trails.

Pumpkin Week attracted over 1,500 visitors, with the Three Ponds being transformed into an aptly named Spooky Stroll. Guests were welcomed by a web of ghosts, bats, a mini graveyard, a witches' brew and a cauldron of 'spooky juice'.

Many of you attended our Supporter's Barbecue in September last year. This was our much-awaited re-union, when for the first time in 2 years, we could meet again in person. It was lovely to have 160 people join us and to see people engage with nature and enjoy the guided walks around the farm.

### **Our staff and development**

Over the past six years we have had an ongoing development programme for our senior staff team. This has been supported by an external trainer and coach, to continue to evolve a positive leadership culture in-line with our values.

Following on from our Gold Membership status with the Mental Health Charter, the Board have also agreed a new Emotional Health and Well-being Policy for FCLI.

The well-being of our staff is central to much of what we do at Fordhall, and as a result we also have a reward policy in place for any staff member who has been with us for five years. In this instance, they have the opportunity to choose to take a paid development programme/sabbatical of their choice. In 2021, after ten valuable years of Fordhall service, our Care Farm manager Bex, took up this opportunity. We provided funding for her to attend a Special Yoga course, which offered specific training allowing Bex to now run a yoga session with adults with learning disabilities. She thoroughly enjoyed the course, and the group are already reaping the benefits, with new projects planned on the horizon for 2022.

Each Autumn we all come together - the Farm Team, FCLI staff and the Board - to celebrate our success and share our thoughts and ideas for the following year.

In 2021, we reflected on the huge fluctuations of the pandemic and how we have wonderfully adapted to the changes and the needs of our visitors and the community.

### **Going forward, 2022 will continue to be a year to test and learn new activities, evaluate our impact and reduce our climate footprint.**

It's important that we make best use of our Straw Lodge and all our wonderful assets in the best possible way, whether that be for weddings, scout groups, school residential visits, yoga and recreational activities and training.

Looking after our natural environment has always been a priority and core to what we do here at Fordhall. The Pandemic has brought it to the forefront of all our daily lives. We believe our supporters and visitors expect us to lead by example, to influence change, work

with partners who share our values, and share best practice as we learn on our journey.

Following our planning day the Board have updated our Strategic Aims to ensure that our approach to the Climate Emergency and Ecological Crisis is embedded in all we do.

In summary, we have had many challenges, managing through the myriad of issues and changing policies throughout the pandemic. Yet, we have come through strong.

Supporting our staff has been our priority through times of their own sickness. Supporting them with their own well-being and their return to working on the premises. Charlotte, with the assistance of the Board has done an amazing job throughout.

I want to take the opportunity to thank wholeheartedly, all staff, team leaders and management for your determination, compassion, collaboration and continual commitment to Fordhall.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Board for the extraordinary amount of work they have dealt with this year.

The work of the Covid sub group was critical throughout the pandemic. It gave us an agile way of dealing with changes that had to be put in place with changing Government

restrictions. I am pleased that we were able to dissolve that group in the middle of 2021 and the full Board resumed all responsibility.

We have several things in place to self-regulate and continually review how effective we are being as a Board. We have a Good Governance survey that all board members complete annually, to check how we are doing against our key responsibilities. I followed this up through 1-2-1's with each Board member. We then bring all of this information together and agree any corrective actions for continual improvement. One outcome was additional safeguarding training, which was prompted as a result of the issues we were seeing with those we support during the pandemic. We subsequently, appointed Sarah Knowles, who has a wealth of experience, as our Safeguarding Champion on the Board.

That just leaves me to say a whole heartedly thank you to all of you, shareholders, supporters and funders, who are continually generous and exceptional with your commitment and support to FCLI.

**Christine Tate, Chairperson**



## Fordhall Climate Statement

We recognise the Climate Crisis and Ecological Emergency as a disaster. We believe we all need to be part of the solution. We are therefore devoted to continuing to implement methods and approaches that limit environmental and climatic impact, whilst also enhancing our natural environment and biodiversity. Our approach is two pronged, as we appreciate that enhancing nature's ability to sequester carbon is just as important as us limiting our own impacts.

This journey is one that we will continue to share with you all.

Our Objectives:

1. To protect and enhance our natural environment.
2. To incorporate environmental planning into our process and to carefully balance our decisions.
3. To work within our resources and financial constraints to continue to keep our carbon footprint as low as possible.
4. To continually revise our practices, to be a leader where we can, and improve our environmental credentials at all time.
5. To share our knowledge and be a catalyst for others.



## Treasurer's Report

How difficult it has all been. First Brexit, then the pandemic, and now Ukraine. Its hard to think about what's happening there when we are sitting here in the beautiful

peaceful Shropshire countryside.

But from the global to the local, let's think about Fordhall. Looking at it purely from a financial point of view, 2021 has continued to be positive. Charlotte and the team have navigated the pitfalls of successive lockdowns, and we have continued to trade, to educate, and hopefully to inspire through the year, such that we achieved a trading surplus of over £26,000 against a budget figure of just £16,000.

So, where has this come from?

Despite being largely closed for the early part of the year, Arthur's Farm Kitchen has generated good surpluses. Manager Nina and Chef Richard, plus the rest of the café team, have really turned things around in the last year. Margins are up and wastage is down.

Community activities and events have proved successful, especially Picnic with the Lambs in the spring, and the Pumpkin Festival in the autumn.

The yurts have been busy all year, benefiting from the fashion for "staycation" holidays during Covid restrictions on foreign travel. Long

may that continue, for its benefits to the planet as well as to Fordhall!

During the year we sold 104 new shares, although we had to refund 60 following the sad deaths of members. As a little aside here, perhaps I could remind shareholders that they can donate their shares back to Fordhall on their passing, simply by completing a letter of intention (available from the office).

The gorgeous building that is the Straw Lodge is now really coming into its own. Not only has it facilitated an expansion of our Care Farm and Youth Project work by giving the people somewhere warm and dry to be when it's pouring down outside - or just too cold - but we are earning direct income now by hosting private parties, yoga groups and weddings.

The numbers I have referred to are just cash, but of course accountancy is a bit more complicated than that so when all the accounting adjustments like debtors and creditors, and accruals and prepayments are taken into account, that cash surplus translates into a declared £96,710, and a very satisfactory 5.9% growth in shareholders' funds.

This brings me on to our cash reserves. Suffice to say that the Board, with the Treasurer's blessing obviously, now feel that it is safe to spend some of those accumulated reserves, and with that in mind we have allocated £40,000 to be spent on our response to the Climate Emergency and Ecological Crisis.



Now just a few words about our budget for 2022. Budgeting is always a bit of a dark art at the best of times, but this year it has been doubly difficult what with the uncertainty of coming out of Covid, and now this sudden rush of inflationary pressures. Nevertheless, in my view budgeting is also about looking at worst case scenarios, to make sure that any planned expenditure does not pose any existential risk to the organisation. Without going into any detail here, our budget indicates a trading surplus for 2022 of just over £14,000, not huge but in line with our historical performance and certainly enough to keep the wolf from the door. The downside for 2022 though, is that there is £11,000 of interest free loans falling due for repayment, and of course our regular mortgage repayments of about £5,000. But in every year that I have been privileged to be Treasurer, we have always exceeded budget. Hmmm, perhaps that says something about our budgeting skills? Also, in most years some of that loan capital either gets rolled forward or even donated by our kind shareholders, and therefore we do expect to break-even in the very worst case.

So, this is the point where I pass the baton over. This will be my last Treasurer's Report. I have occupied the role, hopefully with some degree of competency, since being strong-armed into the job by previous FCLI Chair, Chris Eldon Lee, in 2015. What can I say? Fordhall as you all know is such a wonderful place, and I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at the sharp end of the business. But, also to mention here how much I have learned about myself during my time here. How I have discovered that I can do things that I never thought I would be able to, not least like standing up at each AGM in front of all you lovely people. Fordhall does that to you, you know!

It only remains for me to thank Charlotte, Marie and the team, Chris and the rest of the Board, for their support over the years.

Thank you very much.

Bob Griffiths, Treasurer.



	2021 (£)	2020 (£)
<b>OPERATING INCOME</b>		
Merchandise	610	482
Property rental	15,500	14,433
Events & courses	17,195	11,688
Education	102,185	56,262
Arthur's Farm Kitchen	114,210	81,014
Newsletter	15,366	15,166
Gifts & donations	74,215	87,201
- Legacy income	-	100
Gift Aid	10,468	15,275
Grants	121,776	101,603
Other income	5,042	39,864
Consultancy	1,426	6,265
Yurts & Straw Lodge	22,875	24,424
<b>TOTAL Income</b>	<b>501,468</b>	<b>453,777</b>
<b>OPERATING COSTS</b>		
<u>Costs of generating funds</u>		
Merchandise	713	548
Events & courses	3,500	9,658
Advertising & marketing	5,499	1,908
Project delivery	12,536	11,373
Education materials	11,813	11,926
Arthur's FK purchases	52,532	35,875
<u>Management and Administration</u>		
Staff salaries, NIC & pension	226,567	209,874
Travel	144	158
Printing & office supplies	14,656	15,747
Accountancy & audit	3,775	3,900
Heat & light	6,520	5,493
Insurance & rates	9,930	9,080
Repairs & maintenance	6,092	15,126
Telephone & internet	1,082	1,211
Subscriptions	2,234	1,234
Bank charges	2,268	2,296
Legal & professional	4,395	986
Staff training	6,115	3,458
Sundry expenses	707	182
Depreciation	33,077	23,951
Unrecoverable VAT	-	334
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>(404,155)</b>	<b>(363,650)</b>
<b>Operating Surplus</b>	<b>97,313</b>	<b>90,127</b>
Other Interest receivable	190	246
Interest payable	(793)	(928)
<b>Surplus/Deficit</b>	<b>96,710</b>	<b>89,445</b>

#### **Auditor's Report:**

In our opinion the financial statements: give a true and fair view of the state of the society's affairs as at 31st December 2021 and of its income and expenditure for the year then ended; and have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and are in accordance with the requirements of the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014.

## Your Tenant Farmer's Report



Since the last AGM we have been steadily coming out of Covid lockdown restrictions. Of course, Covid affected all aspects of the farming business, but we have

managed to bounce back. In fact, 2021 was our busiest year yet for the event catering, with people desperate to get back out and about with others.

If there is a positive from the pandemic, it is the amount of new people who have discovered Fordhall for a range of different reasons. We are very lucky to have lots of outside space, which has made welcoming people possible while still keeping everybody feeling safe. It's great to be able to appeal to a whole new audience who may have never otherwise thought to visit us. Our job now, is to maintain the interest of these new customers by keeping them engaged with our products and services, which we are doing through a stronger social media presence and regular updates through emails.

Over the past couple of years, we have really focused on investing in the long-term infrastructure of the farm. This has involved

renewing almost every fence and lots of gates on the farm, plus over 2000m of new electric fencing to reduce soil erosion along the riverbanks! I'm fairly confident there is no longer a gate on the farm that is tied shut with bale string which is a big leap forward for Fordhall. We have also invested in Redwood timber posts with a 30-year lifespan, which is a big improvement on previous fencing supplies, which started to fail after 5 to 6 years. I'm hoping I won't have to replace them now for a long time!

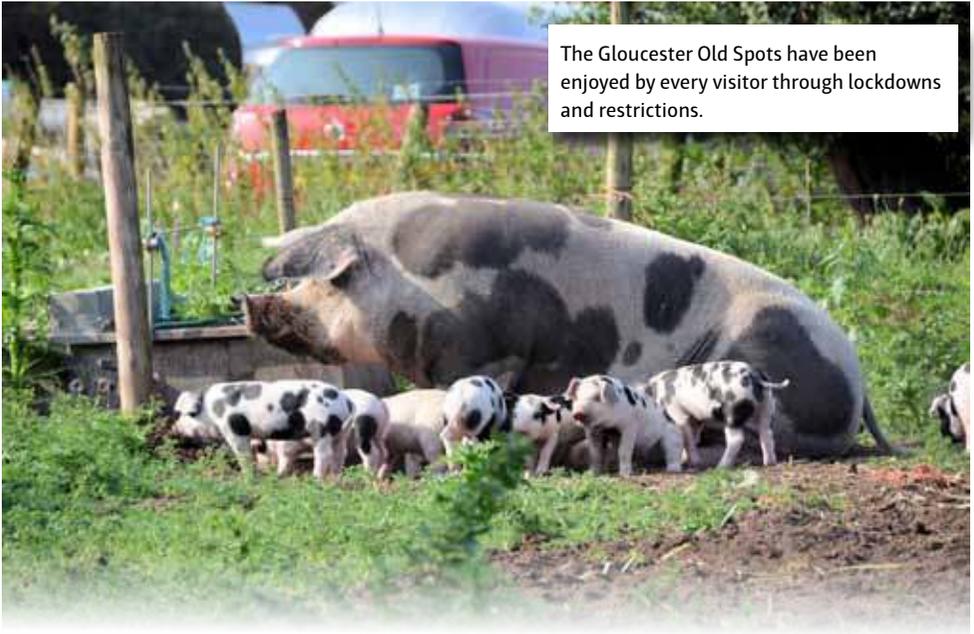
The new fencing is helping to manage the livestock more efficiently with less escapees too. This year we decided to split the breeding ewes into two groups. We had 30 lamb in March and another 80 in April. We put most of the ewes back to April, so that they would be lambing when there is more grass available. Whereas the earlier ones, will help ensure we have a constant supply for the shop. It's worked well so far, and we will likely continue this in the future as a result.

We have a new some additions to the farm too. A new Aberdeen Angus bull and nine new Longhorn heifers. The new bull joined his ladies in May and is looking happy. The Longhorns are all young heifers that will also go to the Angus bull and next spring we will see lots of Angus cross Longhorn calves. The idea here is to encourage improved vigour and health though cross-breeding, using breeds of cattle that will thrive on our traditional pasture like the Longhorns. They look beautiful too and have a fantastic temperament. I spent a long time with the herd before we bought them, to assess their temperament and nature. Especially, with their magnificent horns. I am so pleased to see them finally join the Fordhall herd, as I feel I have been talking about it for too many years now!



Ben visiting the new Longhorn cattle to assess their suitability for Fordhall. It seems he made friends!

The Gloucester Old Spots have been enjoyed by every visitor through lockdowns and restrictions.



## Cottage Field update

Thankfully we were able to graze Cottage Field again for a month at the start of the year, which helped with forage through the winter for the sheep. It is a shame we cannot regain permanent use of what is such an important field to the farming system, especially during the long winter months. We still have hope and our fingers crossed the landowners will reconsider and allow us to buy it soon!

### Event Catering

Surprisingly, 2021 ended up being one of our best years for the catering business with every event we attended exceeding our forecasts. This was driven by people's urge to get out, see



people and do things after the lockdowns, especially with the outdoor events. However, it was a tough year with only a very small team and social distancing still in place. After being shut for 15 months many of our seasonal staff had found other jobs and moved on, but it was great to still have some of the regular guys helping us to train all the newbies. There are lots of exciting things happening with catering at the moment. We have a new apprentice in the office, Shauna, and a new event manager starting with us in a few weeks to help take the pressure off.

We also have some new events in the calendar this year. Including the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham and, excitingly, we have won the contract to provide the retail catering at The RHS Tatton Park Flower Show.

When we started the catering business over ten years ago, I had aspirations to provide catering for two major national

events. One was Cheltenham Gold Cup and the other was Chelsea Flower Show. This year we managed to secure four Fordhall pitches at Cheltenham which was a massive success - we had our busiest trading day on record for one of the trailers. All of this has led to a meeting with the RHS at this year's Chelsea Flower Show, with a view to putting a proposal forward for the 2023 event, so fingers crossed we can wow them with what we do!

### On the home front

You may remember, we started in 2020 on a project to renovate the old swimming pool in the farmhouse garden. Knowing it was a mammoth task just to clear the brambles and trees growing in it, we didn't set ourselves a deadline. Nevertheless, 15 months into the project and we are now getting there slowly. The plan is to convert the traditional pool into a natural swimming pool, which will not use any chemicals but instead filters the water through a bed of gravel and plants, to keep it clean. Hopefully we will have it completed for the summer of 2022 – watch this space!



### Manager's Report

We have learnt a lot throughout the 16-years that Fordhall has been in community ownership, and even more over the last two years of the pandemic.

We have learnt that culture is key, belief in our future is key, and investing in long-term visions, strategies and plans is paramount. We can see the effects of the pandemic on our emotional well-being, we now have the rising cost of living, together with the Climate and Ecological Crisis. Now more than ever, we need to shift

So, we are looking forward to another busy year on the farm and I am particularly interested in putting some time aside to look in a bit more depth into how we can continue to adapt and develop Fordhall to continue to be sustainable into the future, especially due to the changes in climate that continue to come our way.

### Ben Hollins, your Tenant Farmer



Eoin and Ben's son, Jamie, making pizza's at the Supporters' BBQ using the newly renovated horse trailer

ourselves away from quick-fixes and short-term gains, and be investing in a long-term future that is better for both people and planet.

### There is hope.

When we work collaboratively as a society, share our knowledge, listen to each other, and when we are kind - sharing a common goal of health and happiness - amazing things happen. This has been proved time and time again within our communities in the last two years. It wasn't systems that saved us, it was people. It was neighbours. It was friends. It was strangers.

Hope also enabled us to believe that the fight for Fordhall Farm was possible when



Dad passed away in 2005. That same hope inspired you all to join in with our challenge. Our combined hope made the seemingly impossible, possible in 2006. Now, 8,000 strangers, have become 8,000 friends.

I have recently been reading Jane Goodall's 'The Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for an Endangered Planet'. The book looks at how best to combat Climate Change and early on in it she says "The cumulative effect of thousands of ethical actions can help save and improve our world for future generations" – sound familiar? She goes on to say that hope requires action and engagement by each and every one of us. Jane says 'hope is contagious. Your actions will inspire others'. Hope, she says, can lead to a better future.

We believe Jane is right.

We are therefore doing what we can at Fordhall, in our own way, to strengthen hope and build ecological resistance.

Dad always believed in the power of nature, and so do we. Nature and farming should not be split by boundaries, fences or hedgerows. Resilience exists when the two are inextricably linked and intertwined.

For this reason, any improvements onsite will form an integrated part of the working farm. Any trees we now plant will be edible or medicinal for the livestock, and hedgerows will create wind belts as well as wildlife corridors. Our own emotional resilience is equally connected to nature. Therefore, our Appeal for Change work will continue to rebuild the relationships we have with nature and green spaces.

The answers of course are complex, and involve far more than we know or understand at Fordhall, but **hope** in a future which is healthy, happy and nourishing has to be a great start.

**Charlotte Hollins, General Manager**



Charlotte's daughter Katherine enjoying the Fordhall woods

# What did your community farm achieve in 2021?

## Promoting an understanding that viable small-scale farming can encourage biodiversity and help combat climate change

As the risks of climate change grow and the ecological emergency looms, we are as committed as ever to investing in habitat creation at Fordhall.

We are pleased to say that the pond we created in March 2021, has now settled in. The wild flowers are blooming, the frogs are spawning and the insects are pollinating. The watercress has certainly found its niche and bats seem to be enjoying the space. We hope newts will soon make their home in our hibernaculum and that grass snakes will nest in the straw den we created. This project has involved so many on the farm. Our Care Farm planted wildflowers, the youth project planted wetland plants, and volunteers jumped into the pond to plant lilies! We have to give special thanks to the Severn Trent Biodiversity Booster Fund for supporting this wonderful project.



The new spring fed wildlife pond is already a hive of activity. Volunteers have worked hard tree planting



Tree planting along the river Tern continued during the winter months; with aspen, poplar, oak, hazel and more; helping to protect our river banks and provide shade for both our land-dwelling livestock and our water dwelling creatures such as eels and crayfish.

190m of new mixed hedgerow was also planted by our wonderful Care Farm group. This hedgerow has been logged as part of the as part of the 'Queen's Green Canopy' to celebrate her Platinum Jubilee year. The hedgerow surrounds our Ringwork and Bailey site and includes varieties such as aspen, oak, holly, field maple, hazel and crab apple. We are looking forward to seeing it thrive in this community space. Providing not only a new wildlife corridor, but also a wind break for livestock, visiting schools and food for our native birds.

Investment in habitat creation is something that we plan to continue at Fordhall. We believe this investment is needed to ensure our farm remains resilient into the future - improving biodiversity and encouraging carbon sequestration, therefore reducing our own carbon footprint as well.

2021 also saw us complete a carbon footprinting exercise for the first time. With help from Shropshire Wildlife Trust intern, Joe Wilcox, we calculated our footprint for the 2019 (pre-Covid) year. These results will form the baseline for both the Fordhall Community Land Initiative and the farm business. Allowing us to monitor the impacts we have over the coming years and the effectiveness of the actions we take to reduce our carbon footprint. Of course, with all of these exercises, there are assumptions that need to be made and mathematical models to be followed, both of which take the

results a step away from reality. However, they do provide us with a framework and baseline to work to. Meaning that, as long as we continue to follow the same model, we will have accurate results to compare.

For those who are interested, the calculations showed that for the 2019 calendar year, the carbon footprint of FCLI was 31.98 tonnes of carbon dioxide emitted. The FCLI Board have a policy to reach net Zero by 2030 and are currently working on this strategy. The same exercise was also conducted with our tenant farmer and whilst this is a separate business, we are supporting Ben to reduce his carbon footprint too.

We recognise that life is all about balance and we see that a balance will be needed between our activity (which emits carbon), biodiversity, sequestration, and social impact. In addition, we have a big focus on education, changing behaviours and building ecological resistance on site. Nevertheless, this is a very complex area and one that we are still learning about ourselves.

Carbon reporting will become something that we present at each AGM, in the same way as we report on our finances. Allowing our progress to be benchmarked and reviewed by you all. Most importantly, we will share our learning journey with you all. What we find out, what we trial, what works and what hasn't.

**Create educational and fun experiences which leave lasting memories and encourage a shift in behaviour towards a more environmentally conscious society**

We have been looking to the skies too. We've erected Barn Owl boxes and Kestrel boxes to encourage more of these beautiful birds to our landscape and new partnerships have been

formed with the Shropshire Bird Ringers.

We held a very popular event in August in partnership with Shropshire's inaugural Love Nature Festival. Visiting families were able to see some of our native birds up close. They learnt how their habits are changing and the impacts of climate on their migration and feeding patterns. We plan to continue the bird ringing practices and demonstrations at Fordhall, to better understand population changes here and in Shropshire.

Biodiversity on the ground was not forgotten either. We ran a bug hunt and bug tasting session by Buffy the Bug Hunter! And, of course the worm dance continues to be a favourite for every school that visits Fordhall.



Bug hunting and tree spotting as part of our Love Nature Festival activities

Our annual mushroom foraging walk took place run by Board Member and fungi extraordinaire, John Hughes. Visitors were able to learn about the variety of mushrooms and toadstools around the farm, how to identify different fungi species and understand how they play a vital role in supporting biodiversity and soil health. Our Head Chef, Richard prepared a mushroom-themed feast enjoyed in our Straw Lodge to complete the experience.



Mike Grabarz leading a school educational visit



For the first time, we also ran an edible and medicinal foraging walk for staff. We appreciate that it is only by investing in the continued learning and development of our team, that we can build our influence outwards. These sessions were thoroughly enjoyed by all and resulted in the teams incorporating them into menus and drinks for their project groups.



Whilst restrictions were in place for most of the year and for the remainder, people were rightly cautious, accommodation in our Straw Lodge was not in demand from the schools and youth groups we had hoped for. Nevertheless,

**“They needed this. . . . It’s amazing what a few hours in the outdoors can do”. School Teacher**

the Straw Lodge has accommodated a number of day events and activities, including, yoga groups, guided tours and some small private parties. As we move into 2022, we are excited to bring in residential visits with gusto and we are thrilled to share that we held our first residential for a number of deaf children from a school in Wolverhampton in March 2022.

We hosted a number of wedding and other celebratory events during 2021, including the marriage of our own Youth Project Worker, Mike and his fiancé, Emily. Each wedding at Fordhall is made personal and bespoke to the

couple involved. Mike and Emily celebrated their marriage in our Roundhouse in the woods and it could not have been a more perfect day. Something that we were honoured to host for them.

Last year, over 59 (45 in 2020) volunteers attended our Farm Fridays and Volunteer weekends, giving up 1,968 (1,471 on 2020) hours of their time. This has kindly enabled us to maintain farm access, develop our conservation projects and keep our community events running smoothly. This year, with Covid restrictions lifted, we are hoping to increase the number of volunteers and make our volunteer weekends and Farm Fridays a real community hub, where all are welcome to come and get stuck in, meet new friends and share our journey.

School visits did make a small return in 2021 and we were pleased to host 11 sessions. Whilst a much-reduced volume to pre-pandemic levels, it was great to get back outside with classes.

Our farm trails continued to be popular and the seasonal theme started in 2020 continued, with trails including Animal Homes, Bug trails, Be a Farmer, Tremendous Trees and the Enchanted Forest. Each trail has different messages and stories to tell, each one engaging all ages with our landscape, our farm and the nature that surrounds us.

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## Have a positive impact on well-being through increasing people’s connections to nature and the environment

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External funding for our Afternoon Amble continued until the middle of 2021, and due to the impact we could see it was having, we decided to cover the cost for a further 18-months whilst we continue to build links

# Case Study: Hope spreads

"I just wanted to touch base with both of you to thank you for your support, it means so very much. Wendy and Mike have been absolutely amazing both with us and the girls and I think we have made good friends for life there! They are so good at what they do and have a special way of getting the girls to dig deep and reach their potential, try new things and experience that feeling of accomplishment! - amazing!

I would also like to thank you personally for the enormous amount of inspiration you have given to me through your story - I have just finished reading your book about saving the farm and it has filled me with so much determination to make our business work and to get out of the bad situation which COVID left us in.

Your book made me smile and cry but the

message was very clear and very strong - if you want something hard enough and you are willing to give it everything – blood, sweat and tears - you can achieve anything! Every time I feel that life's too hard, or money is tight or my mental health is suffering and I feel worried or hopeless because there are some dark days - I think of your fight and I take the strength from you to carry on.

Thank you so much for the motivation and thank you so much for working so very hard to save your farm - it's such a wonderful place to visit filled with wonderful people and every person who visits feels the love!

I didn't know your Dad, but from what I have read about him in your book, he was wonderful too and I bet he is looking down so proud of what you have achieved! Thank you for allowing me to be a part of that xx

---

with the local GPs and Social Prescribing team. Our Afternoon Amble sessions across the farm are all about improving wellbeing by bringing people and nature together. These events are followed by a cuppa and a cake and activities such as making yarn from Ben's sheep fleeces and natural craft activities.

## Wellbeing scores, before and after attending the Afternoon Amble, increased on average by 80%.

The Youth Project continued through the period and saw demand for services grow with the impact of the project encouraging more schools to get in touch. Out of those we were able to track post education, 72% of the young people continued in education, 23% progressed into further education, and 2% progressed onto further training.

Leaving only 2% who were excluded from school and could be identified as NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training). This are hugely powerful figures for young people, that at the start of attending our project were largely identified as risk of being NEET post 16. 21 AQA certificates awarded to the 10 young people attending.

Data shows that after 8 weeks of attending the service we see a 14% increase and after 13+ weeks (13 weeks being an average school term) we have seen a 22.6% average increase in levels of confidence, self-control, motivation, resilience, and focus.

Increasing access to Fordhall is something we are continually trying to improve, and the investment in a new Tramper was a huge success. Now available to hire for anyone that has restricted mobility, this all-terrain mobility scooter allows anyone to explore the farm safely. Launched at our annual



*Helen making full use of the Trampler at our Supporters' BBQ*

Supporters BBQ (200 supporters attended) to the delight of many, the Trampler is now available for the general public to hire during their visit.

*“Linda and I would like to thank you for an absolutely wonderful very feel-good day at the supporters BBQ. Your warm welcome, caring, and all that you do for Fordhall, the environment and the community just shines through and it just feels so special. I have been with you from the beginning and to see how much you have achieved and are achieving is truly inspirational and heart-warming. And my adventure on the Trampler with Nicola was absolutely wonderful and I couldn't stop smiling for days!! What a great idea, thank you. We wish you well always in all you do, and so looking forwards to coming again when we are able. With our best wishes and a big smile,  
Marion Potter and Linda Plummer”*

**Provide and increase the understanding of good food made from local/seasonal produce, which benefits people and planet**

2021 saw our work with Market Drayton

Foodbank continue, and through the eight months of the Social Enterprise Support Funded programme we welcomed over 90 people to the farm to attend support sessions.

Participants have learnt about nutrition and how to cook healthy meals. Many have subsequently joined in other support sessions including woodwork, mindfulness crafting and some of our seasonal events like the Picnic with the Lambs.

*“I'm doing well. I've been following the advice and tips that Kate has told me. It's been very useful advice that I've been looking for with my medical issues as help towards weight loss.” Participant from Market Drayton Foodbank*

Not one to miss out on an opportunity, we made the most of Kate's nutritional training, and promoted her to status of the Fordhall Nutritionist in Residence. During the period, Kate not only ran sessions for the youth project, care farm and Foodbank participants, but she also shared her knowledge in Arthur's Farm Kitchen and the farm shop through displays, takeaway recipes and blogs.

Foraging was also on our list and our first Nettle Day was hosted in celebration of this mighty plant. With nettle shortbread, nettle pesto and nettle tea on offer visitors could also make nettle



*The bees love borage and so do we. The team often use borage flowers to decorate our salads*



prints and even try their hand at making rope from the nettle stalks. Its nutritional benefits were shared, as well as its medicinal qualities, allowing this powerful and ferocious plant the opportunity to share some positive press and love.

## Influence innovative approaches to using our assets, particularly the land, for the benefit of community and climate

Charlotte's work to spread the message beyond Fordhall continues. With many farm tours hosted through the period and even a contribution to United Nation's Sustainable Food Summit. She has offered support to a community-owned farm in Northern Ireland, an estate in Cheshire, a care farm in Pembrokeshire and a wonderful family farm on the Isle of Wight. Each project and each farm is completely different, and each takes away something different from the Fordhall journey. Ensuring our learning is shared and where possible is used to help other farms survive and thrive.

More recently, Charlotte has become one of six community leaders spearheading a campaign to push for a Community Power Act through parliament. Beginning in October 2021, this campaign promises great potential. A Community Power Act, if successful, will see legislative powers



*Our Care Farm group showing off their parsnips and then making apple juice with a new apple press that was generously donated to us*

passed down to community level, so we all have the right to self-determination for our places, spaces and resources. It is early days, but we definitely say 'watch this space'.

Sneaking into February 2022, we hosted the 'Soil Health and Regenerative Agricultural' course for Farmers and future farmers that want to learn about regenerative agriculture. Led by industry expert Niels Corfield who has worked to deliver truly sustainable food and farming systems for 15 years.

## Monitoring and evaluation

Impact measurement continues to be an evolving process for us and much progress has been made in 2021. We now have a draft process of how we will encourage behavioural change, and plans are in place to measure progress against our strategic objectives. There is still a lot of learning, especially as measuring behavioural change is not straight forward. Nevertheless, we are hopeful that our plans will start to bear fruition in 2022 and provide the evidence we need to guide our decisions and continue best practice .

# Thank you to all our fantastic volunteers in 2021

These amazing 59 people together clocked up over 1,968 hours  
(1,471 hours in 2020).

Adam Pellis, Anthony Lewis, Beth Lacey, Bethany Hawkings, Brendan Price, Cadi Price, Chris White, Christopher Mould, Dan Bridgewater and Clare, David Proctor, Dilys Riley, Dominic Pinto, Elaine, Lewis, Ellie Lee, Gary Kanes, Grace Bishop, Hayley Chapman, Isaac Radford, Jason Wright, Joena Scott, Kate Almoosa, Keith Morrison, Leda Tustin, Lesley McNeil, Molly Pool, Neil Clark, Paul Bishop, Peter Riley, Piers Bridges, Rob Lee, Ruth King, Sarah Smith, Shirley Manning, Steve Ballard, Viv Watkins, Will Hawkins, Neil Page, Sammy Page, Amy, Andrew Bailey, Will Pugh, Sally Wasser, Alex Rook, Rick Miller, Ian McDowell, Julie Cooper, Jack Tavernor, Ben Hollins, John Hughes, Christine Tate, David Holton, Kathryn Rhodes, Sarah Knowles, Lesley McNeil, Nathan Rous, Bob Griffiths, Izabella Natrins, Mike Foy

*Interested in volunteering?* We have weekly opportunities to help in our office, and practical opportunities on our Volunteer Weekends or regular Farm Fridays.

Call 01630 638696 or email [project@fordhallfarm.com](mailto:project@fordhallfarm.com) for details.



# Thank you to our funders in 2021



business in  
community  
hands



Thanks to the Big Lottery – Our Bright Future Programme (Growing Confidence Project), Power to Change (Community Business Renewal Fund), Shropshire Rural Community Council (Covid PPR support), and BBC Children in Need (Youth Project), for which the initiative is extremely grateful.

We would also like to acknowledge the generous support from our wider community and members for their donations and those who left us a gift in their wills or pledged to do so in the future.

## Visit us Tuesday - Sunday

Fordhall Community Land Initiative Ltd.  
Fordhall Organic Farm  
Market Drayton  
Shropshire  
TF9 3PS

We are on the outskirts of Market Drayton on the A53, next door to Müller Dairy.

Tel: 01630 638696 Email: [project@fordhallfarm.com](mailto:project@fordhallfarm.com)

### Opening Times for Arthur's Farm Kitchen and Farm Shop:

Tuesday - Saturday: 9.30am - 5pm (10am-4pm, Arthur's Farm Kitchen)  
Sunday: 10am - 4pm (also open Bank Holidays)



Find us on Facebook  
Fordhall Organic Farm



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@fordhallfarm



Follow us on Instagram  
@fordhallfarm

# Plan a stay on your farm



Hire our Yurts for a relaxing getaway



Sleeps 6 people

Real beds  
BBQ and stove

Off Grid

Covered deck  
with valley  
view

Wildlife  
spotting

To book and check availability see [www.fordhallfarm.com](http://www.fordhallfarm.com)

Coming  
Soon

Fordhall  
Farm 2023  
Calendar

Keep an eye  
on our social  
media and  
website for  
the pre-order  
launch!



CALENDAR  
2023



## Rapunzel Outdoor Theatre

Tuesday, August 30, 2022 2:30pm & 6pm

Book through our website or Facebook | limited tickets |  
[www.facebook.com/fordhallorganicfarm](http://www.facebook.com/fordhallorganicfarm)



## Dear shareholders

# Have you considered what happens to your shares when you pass on?

As a shareholder, your contribution remains in your ownership throughout your lifetime. When you pass on, it becomes part of your Estate. At this point there are a number of options, but instead of leaving the paperwork to your relatives to sort, we can help complete it ahead of time.

By choosing to donate your shares back to Fordhall, or by passing them onto someone else in your family who wants to support our work, you'll be making sure this special place of hope, can live on after you're gone.

So, if you have the time, please do get in touch with our Membership Support Officer, Kate. She will send on a form for you to choose what action is to be taken when the time comes; allowing us to act on your wishes without too much burden on your family.

For more information please get in touch with Kate via email [membership@fordhallfarm.com](mailto:membership@fordhallfarm.com) or call us in the office on 01630 638696

Our Community Benefit Society incorporation number is: IP30030R.  
Our Exempt Charity Reference number (for the purposes of Gift Aid, for us to receive tax-free gifts or legacies) is XR91116.

Thank you x