

# Annual Review 2022



Photo courtesy of Fran Lant

Proud to be community owned





## Chairperson's Report

2022 will be remembered as another year of rapid change and history-making events. From the passing of

Queen Elizabeth II to surging inflation, a cost of living and energy crisis, soaring temperatures and a summer drought! It's difficult to recall a year of so many far-reaching events, impacting on people's financial and physical health, well-being and on our planet.

Here at Fordhall, Ben, Charlotte and the teams have navigated through these rapid and often unexpected changes. Responding to the challenges and continuing to inspire those who have come to Fordhall or have otherwise connected with us through our communications and social media.

FCL I has been true to its purpose and values and has adapted its services and activities in response to these very many changes.

### Reflection on priorities for 2022

At last year's AGM, we said our top two priorities for 2022 would be to:

- test new and existing activities and evaluate our impact.
- define our role in tackling the climate and ecological crisis.

We introduced the theory of change model alongside impact measurement work. Whilst we track numbers it is also important that we track the impact that we are having against our aims. Are our nature-based activities creating a sense of connection and improving well-being? Are we creating lasting behavioural change for the good of people, the environment and the planet?

I have been particularly touched by the programmes we have run to support people who have suffered with their mental health and may have become lonely and isolated.

These programmes are designed to improve mental wellbeing through connections with nature. Fridays on the farm feature a number of social prescribing activities including gardening, walking and practical volunteering.

I know from my own experience of coming here to Fordhall how it has had a positive impact on my own well-being and emotional resilience. This is also experienced by whoever I bring along to Fordhall, whether it's the grandchildren to the Wicked Woods event or my friends whom I brought to the Dawn Chorus event. Fordhall leaves a lasting impression.

“We had the perfect walk here this morning. We are very lucky to have this on our doorstep, and it is the perfect place to exercise your children, as there are plenty of animals to see, and there is a sort of wild play area in the wooded section of the trails. In fact, we all had a go! In summer you can find all sorts of bugs, and dragonflies by the pond.”  
Fordhall visitor

Other things that we tested and trialled last year relate to our Appeal for Change funding, gratefully raised through members in 2020. These included:

1. Funding a full-time educational and engagement post to boost school visits, run family woodland sessions, and build onsite engagement. The post definitely moved us a step forward and school visits have continued to grow in popularity post-Covid, but we also learnt that a full-time post is difficult to sustain with the periodic and seasonal demand of visits, resulting in a more dynamic staffing structure in 2023.
2. We acknowledged that schools

continue to struggle with the cost of coaches and this remains a barrier to visits.

3. We trialled our first residential visits in the Straw Lodge, which were successful and we will now grow them.
4. We ran our first cookery session. Chef Richard and onsite nutritionist Kate ran an engaging session for a local school, which involved the children foraging for goodies in the garden to make leek and potato soup and herb scones, which they then ate for their lunch.
5. We also trialled a menopause and nutrition session, hosted yoga sessions, hosted our first two seasonal food celebration events focused around the summer solstice and Samhain, and ran a Bioblitz weekend, which involved pond dipping, bird surveys and invertebrates, amongst others.

More than ever, we recognise the Climate Crisis and Ecological Emergency as a disaster. Working with and preserving the natural environment is something on which we place a serious emphasis.

At Fordhall we believe that we need to be part of the solution as we drive towards the nation's net zero targets.

So, our second priority for 2022 was to really focus on our journey to reduce our climate footprint by implementing methods and approaches that limit environmental and climate impact, whilst enhancing our natural environment and biodiversity.

We wrote our Climate Change statement, which includes our commitment to research the topic and review our practices on a periodic basis. The Board agreed to allocate £40,000 towards work in this area during 2022.

FCLI staff and the Board identified priority areas for our investment and focus. These were circulated to all 8000+ shareholders for

consultation last spring.

These discussions, together with the surveys you all completed, resulted in you defining our priorities, which we grouped into the following categories:

- Reducing our reliance on fossil fuels
- Research and leadership
- Agriculture and encouraging our biodiversity
- Good food production
- Sharing our knowledge and being a catalyst for others

Many of the activities we conducted during the year as a result of that consultation and investment are noted later in this review. As part of the process we provided staff and Board climate focussed training, which helped us understand how to respond to the risks, opportunities and responsibilities ahead.



Fungi are a vital part of the farms biodiversity.

We know we can't change the world alone, and we certainly don't have all the answers, but we intend to continue to share our practices and our small and big wins, to demonstrate it is a journey and every action counts.

As you are aware, the FCLI Board and the teams at Fordhall take Health and Safety most seriously and 2022 was no exception.

All accidents, incidences and near misses are reported to the Board, acted upon and learnt from.



We welcomed over 150 guests to our annual Supporters BBQ in September

Through our Care Farm and Youth Project, we are working with vulnerable and young people. Unfortunately, we have had a rise in the number of self-harm cases. Subsequently, Board members as well as the wider staff team have attended safeguarding training. Our safeguarding Board champion is involved in every case, and our safeguarding policy and working practices were reviewed and updated last year to keep up-to-date with changes.

Our policy has been to have an external health and safety audit every three years. Due to our commitment to continual improvement the Board took the decision to have an annual audit, and we appointed a Board member to be our health and safety Champion: Mike Foy.

*"I was really pleased to find that the recommendations made on my first visit in 2018 had formed the basis of a really strong H&S management system. Paperwork was thorough but not excessive and is supported by comprehensive monitoring and recording. The H&S culture at Fordhall Farm feels excellent and I found very little to even consider suitable for improvement. Overall, I came away believing the operations on site*

*are being carried out safely and with real consideration for those involved."* Extract from the external Health and Safety report 2022.

The FCLI is in a strong financial position and it has always been the intention of the FCLI Board that salaries be brought closer to comparative averages as the FCLI can afford to do so. I am delighted that FCLI has been able to bring pay to market averages for the first time. Just two years ago we were still 10% below market value for most of our roles.

I am also pleased that we have built our trading income sufficiently to increase core staffing to enable expansion of residentials, social prescribing and partnership working.

There have been challenges of course including a number of staff off with Covid at the start of the year, compounded with struggles to recruit in hospitality and other roles.

All our people across the farm have come together to make sure everything continues to run smoothly, which reminds us how lucky we are to have such a dedicated and willing staff team.



I want to congratulate and thank the management team and all staff for your resilience and continued passion and dedication, through a very fast-changing and challenging year.

Moving forward in an ever-changing world, it's right that the Board take stock, reflect and develop FCLI's strategic vision and direction for the years ahead. This will be our focus for 2023.

We are looking to provide a sustainable plan for our future tenant farmers, whilst retaining food, education, health and well-being as a focus.

Now, more than ever, we need to invest in our long-term future – one that is better for both people and planet.

We are already well on with this work and we are taking on board all the feedback that we have had from staff and members, and we look

forward to involving you as we progress.

I would like to thank all Board members for their hard work and commitment: to Jack for being our temporary Treasurer and to Paul for taking over the helm. To Mike for taking on the Health and Safety Champion and more recently our Governance Champion. To Lesley for being our Values Champion, ensuring we all live the values in all our decision making and actions. To John for leading on the climate change agenda and to Lucy for taking the lead on the strategy work.

I want to thank Sarah, Kathryn and David who are all stepping down from the Board; they have all brought an array of skills and knowledge to the Board. Most importantly, thank you wholeheartedly to all our members, for your continued support.

**Christine Tate, Chairperson**



*"We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and certainly would recommend to others. Staff were extremely friendly and welcoming towards pupils who were engaged throughout. Well organised with lovely additions such as chefs' hats. Pupils were also sent home with a recipe for what they had cooked so they could repeat at home, a nice touch. Staff were very knowledgeable."*

**Lilleshall school**



## Treasurer's Report

Hello everyone! My name is Paul Austin and I am the new Treasurer on the block. This time last year I was sitting out there in the audience nice and relaxed,

looking forward to an amazing lunch having just been newly voted onto the Board – a cautionary tale for this year's new Board members!

My background was in banking with 30 years at Lloyds Bank and Prudential. I live in Market Drayton. I'm now enjoying early retirement and have two organic allotment plots that keep me very busy.

But that's enough about me! Let's think about Fordhall as we sit here in the beauty and tranquillity of our Shropshire countryside surroundings. Looking at our progress from a financial point of view, 2022 has continued to be a positive story. Charlotte and the team have worked incredibly hard during another challenging year. Though I feel we should remind ourselves that it's not been quite as challenging as the two preceding years.

They have continued to educate and to inspire through the year such that we achieved a trading surplus of over £35,809 against a budget figure of £14,344. For those of you that study the accounts you will have noticed an overall accounting deficit showing. To be clear, this was intended and is different from the operating surplus mentioned in the budget, as it takes into account investments made from cash reserves during the year. Nevertheless, the final cash deficit was lower than anticipated due to project underspends, some of which have been carried forward into 2023 for continued capital investments.

Looking a little closer at how the operating surplus came about, I can share that Arthur's Farm Kitchen has generated good surpluses and continues to offer quality service and products to the local community. The café team

has worked hard against a tough economic backdrop and trade is now higher than pre-pandemic levels.

Stays in the yurts have been steady all year. The fashion for staycation seen during the pandemic has waned nationally, and we have definitely seen an impact too.

We had another good year for share income with £23k of new shares' income received. Sadly, we did have to refund some shares following the deaths of members and ended the year on a positive of £17,500 share income. As always, we are very grateful to shareholders old and new for their support. I would like to remind shareholders that they can donate their shares back to Fordhall after their passing, and the office now has a form that can be completed to confirm your wishes.

As I sit in this beautiful building that is the Straw Lodge, I can report that it continues to come into its own. Not only has it facilitated an expansion of our Care Farm and Youth Project, by giving participants somewhere warm and dry to be when it's pouring down or just too cold outside, but we continue earning direct income by letting it out privately for weddings, meetings and conferences.

During 2022 we accommodated: eight weddings, one theatre production, seven courses (yoga, foraging, nutrition, holistic grazing, soil regeneration), four youth residentials, 16 days of volunteer accommodation and an overall additional income of upwards of £50k.

The Grazer magazine has had an interesting year with a much-delayed price increase coming in. The price went from £17.50 to £28 per year. This is the first increase for over five years and was finally implemented due to increasing costs of publication, but also to retain margins that allow us to continue to claim Gift Aid of 20% on the payments. We are delighted that many have continued to support the move and we thank those who continue to subscribe to this very valuable source of income. We hope you find it

informative and good value for money.

Now just a few words about our budget for 2023. Budgeting is always a bit of a dark art at the best of times, but this year it has been doubly difficult with the uncertainty surrounding the economy and, in particular, some of the dramatically different and ever-changing economic forecasts that were emerging during the process of setting the budget. Nevertheless, in my view, budgeting is about looking at and considering 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 deficit for 2023 of just over £1,267; not what we would ideally like to work with. However, we have been very conservative in our trading forecasting and realistic with our cost forecast. Without wishing to tempt fate, we have exceeded our budgeting forecast in every year that our previous treasurer Bob was at the helm, and we are confident that we will do so again this year – no pressure there then!

In most years, a proportion of our 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. As with this year we would once again expect to see a cash deficit in the year-end accounts. This is due to planned investments of approximately £40,000, which includes investments in our climate work, planned renovations on the farmhouse and other small capital investments and improvements.

The Board has also approved a lump sum mortgage repayment equivalent to 50% of the

existing debt, which will help shield us from the large interest rate increases we have seen recently.

I would like to take the opportunity to give thanks to our funders over the year. As ever, your support is vital and greatly appreciated – Thank You!

Paul Austin, Treasurer.

## 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 2022 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.

	2022 (£)	2021 (£)
<b>OPERATING INCOME</b>		
Merchandise	633	610
Property rental	16,300	15,500
Events & courses	7,510	17,795
Education	111,099	102,185
Arthur's Farm Kitchen	171,159	114,210
Newsletter	16,539	15,366
Gifts & donations	49,364	74,215
- Legacy income	21,302	100
Gift Aid	9,167	10,468
Grants	56,028	121,776
Other income	1,302	5,042
Consultancy	5,121	1,426
Yurts & Straw Lodge	29,282	22,875
<b>TOTAL Income</b>	<b>494,806</b>	<b>501,468</b>
<b>OPERATING COSTS</b>		
<u>Costs of generating funds</u>		
Merchandise	366	713
Events & courses	7,797	3,500
Advertising & marketing	7,632	5,499
Project delivery	21,203	12,536
Education materials	11,813	11,926
Arthur's FK purchases	66,270	52,532
<u>Management and Administration</u>		
Staff salaries, NIC & pension	294,265	226,567
Travel	1,902	144
Printing & office supplies	14,976	14,656
Accountancy & audit	4,000	3,775
Heat & light	9,199	6,520
Insurance & rates	12,291	9,930
Repairs & maintenance	23,360	6,092
Telephone & internet	696	1,082
Subscriptions	1,306	2,234
Bank charges	1,639	2,268
Legal & professional	2,151	4,395
Staff training	5,782	6,115
Sundry expenses	1,106	707
Depreciation	37,755	33,077
Unrecoverable VAT	5,842	-
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>(533,237)</b>	<b>(404,155)</b>
<b>Operating Surplus</b>	<b>(38,431)</b>	<b>97,313</b>
Other Interest receivable	1,465	190
Interest payable	(1,310)	(793)
<b>Surplus/Deficit</b>	<b>(38,276)</b>	<b>96,710</b>

## Your Tenant Farmer's Report



Since the last AGM we have had lots going on at the farm. We had a full year without any major Covid restrictions, which has been a big positive impact on the catering business.

Although we have seen a slow-down in online sales for the shop, this was expected. The online sales remain about 50% up on pre-Covid numbers, which is really positive. We are pleased to see that we have maintained a lot of customers who discovered Fordhall through Covid.

The previous few years have involved a lot of investment into the farm's stock fencing and gates, with the benefits evident during 2022, with less livestock escaping and less time spent trying to get them back where they should be! It's amazing how much easier that makes our life on the farm, just having the confidence stock will stay where we have put them.

During autumn 2022, we completed a new covered feed pad which opens up onto Banky field by the main road. The cows and calves are currently using this area to get access to Fordhall hay whilst grazing the fields behind. Once the spring grass really gets going, we will shut them out of this shed

and they will fully graze for the summer. The shed was a big investment but is a long-term piece of infrastructure, which will become vitally important in those years where we get extreme weather and need the shelter for the stock. Previously, we have rented sheds away from the farm for some groups of calves over the winter. I am pleased we are now completely self-sufficient in housing our stock, and them being back at 'home' makes caring for them much easier. We also improved the handling facilities for the cattle, which also supported the expansion of the shop and café car park.

At the last AGM I updated you on our new Angus bull and the nine Longhorn heifers we introduced into the farm's suckler herd. The good news is that the Angus bull did his job and we have had 26 calves so far this season, with another 28 to come. Seven of these are Longhorn cross Aberdeen Angus calves with two more Longhorns left to calve in the next few weeks. It's interesting as the calves really do look like they are half Longhorn and half Angus; they have the darker colour of the Angus and the speckles along their back and tail of the Longhorn. These calves are a bit smaller than the Angus, but that's to be expected with the Longhorns being first calving heifers. I think they will catch up through the summer.

The new silvopasture project is an exciting addition to the farm. Mike and the volunteers have been busy fencing off the area and planting it with willow and hazel this winter. So, we are looking forward to the trees maturing to a stage where the cattle can access them for forage.

## Cottage Field update

Thankfully, we have been able to graze Cottage Field again for one month during the winter, which helps with forage for the sheep. It is a great shame we cannot regain



Longhorn cattle grazing our pastures through the winter

Ben with son Jamie, and retired Stockman, Terry Jakeman. Terry has worked at Fordhall since his early teens and he still pops in to help on occasion.



permanent use of what is such an important field to the farming system, especially during the winter months. We still have hope – fingers crossed the owner will reconsider and allow us to buy it someday soon.

**Event Catering**

2021 was such a busy year for the catering business that we were a little unsure how 2022 would pan out. Nevertheless, we continued to grow and were boosted by being involved in the Birmingham Commonwealth Games. We managed the catering for eight events in the competition, which we were extremely privileged to be part of. It was a tough process with high levels of security and accreditations needed for the all the staff and vehicles, but was it great to be involved and we felt it was a big success.

We have grown the catering team throughout the year to support the business and now have three new managers on board

assisting with managing the events, staffing and new projects. One of the current projects is building three new bars as we diversify into beer and cider sales. The most exciting concept is for a new 'Cider and Sausage Roll' kiosk for the Edgbaston cricket ground. Customers will be able to grab a Fordhall hot sausage roll alongside a pint. I think the team will be busy in the bakery making lots of sausage rolls this summer! We are hoping the sales from these new bars will help to fill the gap from the Commonwealth Games sales in 2022.

We are also fabricating two new food kiosks that we will rent to traders local to Edgbaston who do not have catering units suitable to trade at the



I was very excited to show Kate Humble around the farm last summer!

stadium. These traders will be independent businesses who are cooking some amazing authentic dishes, but do not have the infrastructure to bring that food to the big venues.

We are continuing to build new relationships with venues, with the newest being the NEC, where we are working with them to bring Fordhall produce to the public and corporate events. We were involved in Crufts, and fed 2,000 people there for a corporate event recently.

### Swimming pool renovation

I have been busy back at home too. In 2021, we started 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. It was last used in the 1960s, so there was a lot of growth to clear! But in August 2022 we managed to make it functional. We have converted it into a natural swimming pond, which does

not use any chemicals. Instead, it filters the water through a bed of gravel and plants to keep it clean, along with a sand filter.

So, we are looking forward to another busy year on the farm, whilst putting some time aside to look in a bit more depth how we can continue to adapt and develop Fordhall to continue to be sustainable in the future.

**Ben Hollins, your Tenant Farmer**



The completed natural swimming pool has seen the Hollins family swim in it for the first time since the 1960s



### Manager's Report

Vibrancy has to be the feel of my report this year. After a year of 'mostly' no Covid restrictions, we have had the freedom to experiment with

new projects at Fordhall. New ways of using the land, and ways of engaging with more members within our community. Our team has done this with positivity, enthusiasm and great energy. Plus, the farm is filled with bugs, butterflies, flowers and blossom. Life above and below ground seems to be flourishing.

Last year I wrote of 'hope' and the power of

believing in what can be possible, and how that belief can make things possible, especially in relation to the climate emergency. That philosophy has always been one that is close to my heart, and it was close to Dad's too. It was evidenced by Dad's journey into organics as he trusted in the work of the worms and microbes in the soil. It was evidenced by the campaign to save Fordhall from development in 2006, when, against the odds, you believed it could be possible. In fact, it is evidenced in all our experiences since at Fordhall. Hope allows us to overcome the biggest challenges.

Many people visit the farm and tell us how much it has changed, how amazed they are at how far we have come, and many come to learn from our example as a result. That success is, of course, down to a lot of hard work from

a huge team of people, but it is also attributable to belief. Belief and trust from you – our members. You encourage us, you support us and – most importantly – have faith in us to make it work. In turn, our Board has faith in the management team, and, subsequently, the management team has faith in the staff and volunteer team.

That belief leads to an organisation that is comfortable in taking risks, one that is happy to make mistakes, and one that loves to try new things. Last year saw us really live our 'Sow the Seed' value. We gathered ideas from others and we experimented with ideas to see which worked and which did not; we then shared that journey – more on that throughout this report.

As our Chairperson Christine noted, we now need to look to the future. Through our trials and tests, and by better measuring our impact, we are getting to know which activities are the best for us to focus on. What is needed at any point in time will continue to evolve with the world and we will continue to be dynamic as an organisation. Nevertheless, every decision should also be supporting our long-term future. A future where the land at Fordhall continues to be nourished long after we have gone, where wildlife continues to blossom, where healthy food is produced, and where people are nurtured; feeling as connected to the landscape as the birds and the bees.

How we do that is a good question! It is one that our Board and staff team are grappling with at the moment, and it is a question on which we will continue to consult with you. Essentially, we want to ensure that the decisions we make now support the longevity of what we have for the next generation of farmers, worms, bees and community.

Even more than that, we want Fordhall's legacy to be more projects like ours. More places that nourish land and people, more places that work democratically for the common good, and more places that work in balance with our natural world. Vibrancy, I believe, is key to that success. Vibrancy in nature through the diversity it supports – colours, species, habitats – with all its trillions of symbiotic relationships; and vibrancy in how we work together as human beings – positively, enthusiastically, diversely and holistically.

**Charlotte Hollins, General Manager**



# What did we achieve in 2022?

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

Sharing awareness of our farming system and approach at Fordhall has always been at the heart of many of our activities. With our focus on the Climate Crisis and Ecological Emergency, we have had a particular focus in 2022 towards limiting our impact and improving our biodiversity onsite. This is driven from our belief that we have to reduce the negative impacts we have through our activity, whilst increasing nature's capacity to sequester carbon and regain a balance.

Our climate objectives are:

1. To protect and enhance our natural environment.
2. To incorporate environmental planning into our processes and to carefully balance our decisions.
3. To work within our resources and financial constraints 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.
5. To share our knowledge and be a catalyst for others.

So, during 2022, our Care Farm team planted a further 850 mixed deciduous hedge plants including fruit and nut trees. The planting continues that which started in 2021, and completes the hedge around the Ringwork and Bailey site at Fordhall. We also



cleared ditches, created wild areas for bugs and wildlife and researched our next steps.

If you follow our Grazer newsletter, then you will know all about our new silvopasture project. If not, then put simply, it is the process of planting trees in a strategic fashion. These trees are chosen and planted to not only create wildlife corridors, but are also planted with the specific purpose of supporting livestock. Trees have long been associated with pastureland across the UK, and perhaps with the removal of so many trees, we are now understanding why we need to put them back (or retain them). Their roots help encourage water filtration and reduce flooding, for example. Their leaves provide shelter from the wind or shade from the hot sun, both of which reduce stress for cattle and sheep, thereby improving their condition, or even removing the need for winter housing. Plus, each autumn they replenish the soil with organic matter from their leaves. In addition to this,



Creating benchmarks for native wildlife on the farm has been a focus during the year





We work hard to work symbiotically at Fordhall. Reusing and partnering as we go.

if you choose the right trees, they can provide a fodder crop to livestock, and in many cases, provide medicinal benefits too! Charlotte and Ben spent 2022 learning from other local farmers, and adding this knowledge to our own practices at Fordhall, for a planting plan to be taken forward in 2023!

Having a better understanding of what we already have at Fordhall is key to us improving and promoting what we have. We are excited to be working with the Shropshire Good Food Partnership, AGRI-Tech ERDF project and Harper Adams University, to determine the impact of Fordhall Farm environmentally, socially and economically on the local area. It is an 18-month project measuring everything from soil biological changes to biodiversity surveys, economic outputs, carbon foot printing and our social impact. The output will be a Fordhall case study demonstrating how the many symbiotic relationships we

have onsite all work together.

To link into this work, we have completed a soil microbiology survey and chosen a number of indicator species to periodically survey onsite. These include bees, invertebrates and dung beetles. With baseline data gathered in 2022, we hope further surveys will help us monitor Fordhall's progress, and benchmark us against other farming systems in the future.

### Reducing our Carbon Footprint

Whilst reducing our energy needs through good insulation, sensible lighting plans and other internal amendments, we appreciate that some energy will always be needed onsite. With the capital investment agreed by our Board, we invested in an air source heat pump to replace the gas heating system in the Straw Lodge in November 2022. The electricity for this pump is largely powered by the PV panels we have on the Straw Lodge roof, making a great partnership. We have had to retain the gas boiler to supply hot water to the building, due to the large number of showers the residential needs, but when this comes to the end of its life, we will look at options to replace this system too.

*"I see it [Fordhall] as a local flagship to progressive farming and land management that puts traditional and sustainable practices into a thriving modern context. I feel it is important for the local school community to have links with such a great example of farming in Shropshire."*

Grove School, Duke of Edinburgh visit

River dipping during our annual Bioblitz found crayfish and baby eel.



The change to a heat pump for heating the building is already showing cost and energy savings into the start of 2023. We look forward to sharing the full impact of this with you next year.

There has been an air source heat pump in our main café and shop building for many years. We are pleased to say that this is now supported by a solar thermal hot water system. So, when the sun shines, that takes the pressure off the air source heat pump for free! This may not be the end either; further installations of renewable technology are being investigated as we endeavour to become less reliant on fossil fuel for the energy that we need.

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

A focus of our experiences for 2022 was climate and ecology. It therefore made perfect sense to partner with the Shropshire Love Nature Festival. We became their largest single contributor, hosting an incredible 13 events throughout the summer. These included a 'Yummy Grubs' session with Zoologist Buffy

Hardy, sharing her wisdom on sustainable protein production whilst enabling participants to sample a range of edible bugs! We also had a pollination spring trail to promote the essential work of our pollinators, and a summer trail telling the story of worms and soil. A Climate Action Day was hosted with Market Drayton Climate Action Group, an evening talk was held on the links of biodiversity loss to climate change, a dawn chorus walk and bird ringing event allowed visitors to understand our impacts on native bird life, and others got involved with a peg loom workshop using Fordhall fleece, demonstrating the benefits of using natural materials in our homes.

To top it all off, we pond-dipped, butterfly-hunted, moth-trapped and more during our Bioblitz, which welcomed over 80 local people.

Experiences at Fordhall are always fun (well that's the plan), and our formal school visits are no different. In 2022, we delivered 62 sessions to 692 school children. We also hosted four

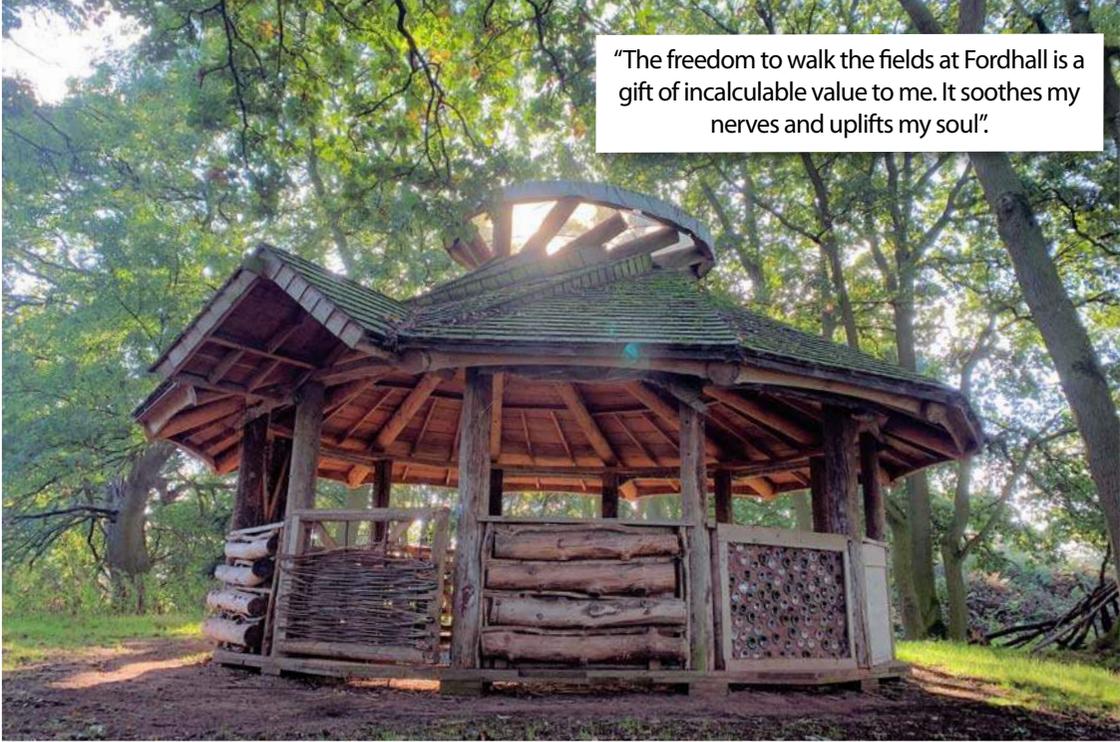


residential for the first time, accommodating 83 children in our Straw Lodge. Plus, our youth team ran an Adventure Camp through the summer holidays: three days of outdoor activities with the final day including overnight camping in the woods in hammocks – we all wanted to join in the fun!

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

Well-being was a large focus following our

“The freedom to walk the fields at Fordhall is a gift of incalculable value to me. It soothes my nerves and uplifts my soul”.



Appeal for Change fundraising, so we ran a 'Winter Wellness' trail at the end of 2022. The rest of the year was filled with a renewed focus on well-being.

Social Prescribing has become the common term for 'experiences' which are restorative for an individual's well-being and can be prescribed in the same way as a clinician can prescribe medication. It is very early days, and whilst referrals do come from medical practitioners, it has proven tricky to turn all referrals to an actual visit to site. This is

“... you're amazing. You appreciate so well what Volunteers do. You care for our well-being. You feed and accommodate us like kings and queens. You are my favourite volunteer location.”

largely due to the vulnerability of the people referred and their associated feelings of anxiety or depression, but also the referral system is still being developed within medical practices.

Nevertheless, our Social Prescribing activities, which are completely funded by us, include a weekly Amble (gentle walk through the fields followed by tea and cake attended by an average of seven people) or our Feel-Good Friday (a 2-hour gardening activity with two to four people).

Initial results suggest that 87.5% of participants have been more sociable as a result of attending the Amble, and everyone believed it had improved their mental well-being.

*“The Amblers are giving me a reason to live life again. Looking forward to Fridays and all*



Our Morning Makers group meets weekly in Arthur's Farm Kitchen

*that we do as a group".*

*"I think that everything that is being done at Fordhall to help people with depression is fantastic. Life can be very lonely and a dark place but when you join the Amblers it is so helpful to a person. Now I can't wait for Fridays or any day that I am at the farm. It has given me a new and happy life".*

Improvements in well-being are not restricted to our social prescribing activities. Simply volunteering with on our regular Farm Fridays, in the office or during one of our volunteer weekends, yields similar results.

*"I have an increase in self-confidence and self-esteem. My anxiety gets better each time I volunteer at the farm."*

The adults with learning disabilities that attend our weekly Care Farm have given comparable feedback.

*"I've been coming here for three years, and as I struggle with my mental health, the Care Farm has helped me with my social anxiety,*



Our Care Farm made seasonal mandalas to celebrate the spring

*helping me to overcome my fear of being around people. I was bullied when younger and not accepted. Coming here has changed all that. People here are non-judgemental and everyone is nice."*

Emotional well-being can be impacted in many ways. Our Youth Project works three days a week with ten young people from the local area who are timetabled out of school to attend. A lot of young people start on the Project unable to manage or understand their emotions and unable to deal with situations without a trauma response (fight, flight, fear, fawn). Over time, we break down their current communications approach and encourage open conversations about where anger comes from and why they may be feeling angry. This encourages responsibility and accountability which then leads on to self-management. Once they start dealing with situations more appropriately, this usually trickles into home life and school. One young person said *"Even my carer agrees. I cope better at home now. Here helps me cope with situations."* L. Ed (Oct 2022).

*"I would like to thank you for his experiences at the farm. He does already seem calmer and more engaging both at home and at school"*  
*Father of B. Fr (Nov 2022)*

All-in-all, our focus on well-being throughout 2022 seems to have impacted



The Youth Project collecting fresh tomatoes to cook a healthy pasta sauce for lunch.

many, and these are impacts that we hope will continue to grow each year through the focused and caring delivery of our staff, aided by the green and wild spaces we have on the farm.

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

Food and nutrition remain a huge part of what we do onsite and our Youth Project is no different. Sometimes this is the only meal of the day for the young people who attend; for others food can present a barrier. We work with them to break down these barriers by exposing them to a wide range of foods whilst talking about where our food comes from. Many of our young people's diets consist of highly processed frozen foods, takeaways and energy drinks.

We encourage a positive, nutritional and healthy experience by preparing and sharing a wide variety of foods such as spaghetti bolognese, homemade burgers, tricolour pasta with local cheeses and vegetables, lamb stew with carrots and potatoes, or spicy sausage pasta. "I cooked this at home. It was lovely. I hadn't really cooked at home



before." D. Ho (Sept 2022). "I have never tried sweet potato before. Actually that's really nice. I love it." A. Ed (Oct 2022)

*"Hi. I had the most amazing day at Fordhall farm learning about 'nuts about nutrition'. It was lovely."*

We also ran our first school cookery session with chef Richard and onsite nutritionist Kate, which involved the children foraging for goodies in the garden to make leek and potato soup and herb scones, which they then all ate for their lunch.

Grazing tables provided a focus for many onsite weddings through the year, celebrating the best of the seasons with over 1,000 guests.



Our Youth Project have been making good use of the Straw Lodge kitchen space.

Nutritional recipe cards were also shared through the Farm Shop, alongside celebrations of each vegetable, and information boards continue to be a focus in Arthur's Farm Kitchen.

The Care Farm continued their chutney making in the winter, and celebrated the year with a roast dinner almost completely sourced from the farm.

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

Spreading the Fordhall message gathered momentum in 2022. Charlotte continued her work as a Community Leader on the campaign team for a Community Power Act. She attended and spoke at the launch in Westminster last March, and continues to be an advocate for the Act, which we hope one day will be brought into legislation. An Act that will bring in legal powers at community roots level, including the valuable Community Right to Buy.

Charlotte and Ben were nominated as a Community Farming Hero during the period, by our local Liberal Democrat MP, Helen Morgan (pictured below), who was very impressed by all the wonderful projects we have running at the farm. Charlotte was also asked to speak at a number of workshops and meetings, including the Down to Earth Conference and the inaugural Anthropy Conference, held at the Eden Project in November. Charlotte spoke in two workshops, sharing the Fordhall story and the campaign for a Community Power Act. The Fordhall story gathered much admiration from the business men and women who attended, all of whom were there supporting a new way of working, a new way of doing business and a new way of measuring success. It was extremely exciting and Charlotte left inspired. It felt as though many of the things Fordhall has been doing for years are being talked about in unexpected sectors, like finance, law and the corporate world. It feels as though cultural change is possible, and here at Fordhall, in our own way, we are playing our part in encouraging that.



Ben and Charlotte with MP Helen Morgan





## Thank you to all our fantastic volunteers in 2022

These amazing 107 people together clocked up over 2,532 hours  
(1,968 hours in 2021 from 58 volunteers).

Alexander Allan, Kate Allies, Peter Allies, Lyn Allies, Kate Almoosa, Paul Auston, Andrew Bailey, Steve Ballard, Paul Beevers, Hannah Billingham, Grace Bishop, Paul Bishop, Joanna Boulton, Naomi Boulton, Michael Boyes, Piers Bridges, Dan Bridgewater, Jenny Briggs, John Briggs, Nigel Cane Honeysetts, Emmeline Cane Honeysetts, Hayley Chapman, Alyssia Clare, Neil Clark, Julie Cooper, Lyn Dicks, Lucy Dowley, Mike Foy, Dylan Franklin, Emily Grabarz, Colin Gunnell, Buffy Hardy, Bethany Hawkings, Will Hawkins, Lucia Hoffer, Benjamin Hollins, David Holton, John Hughes, Niamh Hurley, Tony Jacques, Sarah Jefferys, David Jeffreys, Sandy John, Jackie Jones, Gary Kanes, Ruth King, Ruth Knight, Sarah Knowles, Beth Lacey, Mike Lawley, Ellie Lee, Rob Lee, Anthony Lewis, Elaine Lewis, Shirley Manning, Edward McCarthy, Ian McDowell, Lesley McNeil, Ric Miller, Keith Morrison, Christopher Mould, Neil Page, Sammy Page, Adam Pellis, J Percy, Dominic Pinto, Molly Pool, Mike Price, Cadi Price, Brendan Price, David Proctor, Will Pugh, Isaac Radford, Pat Raymer, Paul Raymer, S Rees, Tim Reeves, Kathryn Rhodes, Peter Riley, Dilys Riley, Jennifer Roberts, Alex Rook, Caroline Rose, Joena Scott, Matilda Simon, Sarah Smith, Christine Tate, Jack Tavernor, Dave Thomas, Gerry Thomas, Leda Tustin, Sue Walker, Sally Wasser, Viv Watkins, Chris White, Jason Wright, Matthew Young, Haines Watts Associates.

### *Interested in volunteering?*

We have weekly 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 2022



Thanks to the Big Lottery – Reaching Communities (Youth Project), 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

Office tel: 01630 638696  
Farm shop tel: 01630 317531  
Email: [project@fordhallfarm.com](mailto:project@fordhallfarm.com)

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

Tues - Sat: 9.30am - 5pm  
(10am-4pm, Arthur's Farm Kitchen)  
Sun: 10am - 4pm (also open Bank Holidays)

## Follow us

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