

Annual Review

2020-2021



Proud to be community owned





Chair's Report

The pandemic has been, and remains, a global disaster of epic proportions. For FCLI, this has been a year of building resilience and strength. Fordhall has risen to the challenge and recognised that this creates a real opportunity for positive change.

We hear so many quotes now as we slowly start to come out of the pandemic.

The term 'Building Back Better' has been increasingly and widely used in the context of the economic recovery from Covid-19.

Times of upheaval are always times of radical change. Some believe the pandemic is a once-in-a-generation chance to remake society and build a better future.

And these are just some of the quotes I have recently read:

"Hopefully, as companies give more attention to the importance of work-life balance, more and more people will be in a better position to decide and act more holistically on what's important to them."

"If everything didn't happen the way it happened this year, then think about it, everything would just be the same."

"Destruction of wildlife and the climate crisis is hurting humanity, with Covid-19 a 'clear warning shot'", quoted by UN's environment chief, Inger Andersen.

I personally believe this pandemic is a world reset. I also

believe, here at Fordhall, we are well placed to do some extraordinary things to encourage change and help the world to be a better place.

Many of you will recall us presenting our 5-year strategy in 2019, and the impacts of the pandemic have really sharpened our thinking and focus of our vision.

It has concentrated our minds on positive change and how important our role is at Fordhall in protecting nature, our wellbeing and the sustainability of the planet. You will have noted that this message came through in our Appeal for Change with our three main themes: connection, compassion and collaboration. The resulting action of this appeal, which raised over £25,000, is being deliberated as we come out of the Covid-19 peak. Some funding has already been approved, including the introduction of an all-terrain mobility scooter onsite. The remainder will be allocated according to our revised strategy and will be moulded around the discussion groups we held during our 2021 AGM.

The last 12 months have been challenging. Sadly, for much of last year, Arthur's Farm Kitchen and many of our activities had to close during Covid restrictions.

However, takeaway Sunday lunches proved to be popular with over 1,200 lunches provided during lockdown; free deliveries were made to local residents self-isolating; Christmas lunches were delivered to local families through the Market Drayton Foodbank, and Ben's trailers were in situ, providing hot takeaway food.



The feedback from our community throughout the pandemic has been heart-warming and so positive.

Tenant Farmer, Ben on the Pizza Trailer.



Fordhall has been in the fortunate position of being able to welcome visitors throughout the last 12 months, to enjoy the farm's lovely green space and to get close to nature, providing huge value for people's physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Whilst Ben's outside catering business effectively closed down for the whole period, the Farm Shop remained open with social distancing in place from the beginning. His staff have been amazingly flexible and hard-working, as has the whole Fordhall team.

I have been particularly inspired and proud to be a part of Fordhall during one of the darkest years that Britain has had in recent times. Fordhall has shown deep compassion and has supported and engaged the local community, in the best ways we could. This has included, amongst many other acts of kindness, donating cream teas and activities to help many local care homes celebrate the VE celebrations on the May 2020 bank holiday, whilst Ben donated pork pies to staff at a local hospital which specialises in mental health.

Our most vulnerable clients were cared for throughout the pandemic by our Care Farm staff. They offered remote support and dropped off care packages and activity boxes during the first lockdown.

We have also kept our social media followers engaged with the farm when they haven't been able to visit, through regular postings and Ben's inspiring videos, showing us the seasonal developments on the land and of the livestock.

I think everyone at Fordhall and FCLI have been amazing and here is a quote from one of many of our visitors who agrees:

"You've all been amazing and have managed the perfect balance throughout the pandemic, so grateful to have you all there with fab food, the shop, the walks and staff keeping us sane the last twelve months".

The restrictions did force us to take all our Board meetings online, so we have not met in person for over 16 months now, meaning our new Board Members have never yet met their

peer Board Members. This has naturally had its challenges. Nevertheless, I am extremely proud of what the Board has achieved.

One of the first actions the Board did was to set up a Covid-19 sub group with full Board delegated powers to enable an agile and flexible way of taking immediate swift actions, allowing us to act responsively to the pandemic. We quickly modified our working practices in line with government policy and managed the closing down and then the re-introduction of activities in line with Covid-19 guidelines. We recalled the sub group at the second lockdown, but were soon able to hand full responsibility back to the full Board, as Charlotte had everything under control.

As you are aware, the health and safety of all our staff, volunteers and visitors to Fordhall is always at the top of our agenda. Over the last 12 months we have had only 11 minor accidents (such as slips and finger cuts) and each one has been investigated and learnings shared.



All the advice from the last external Health and Safety audit has been completed, ensuring we are working to the highest standards. In line with our continual improvement ethos, we are sticking to our commitment of having an external audit every three years, and the next one is due this year.

The Board has worked with Charlotte and the management to ensure all staff were supported throughout the pandemic. Seventy per cent of the staff were furloughed on full pay in the early stages and then gradually they have been

brought back into work, working from home on administrative tasks when it has been viable. During that time, their health and wellbeing have been of paramount importance to the FCLI Board. Regular online meetings and a support network was put in place to ensure all staff felt supported by Fordhall.

In addition, five FCLI staff have now received training in Mental Health First Aid Awareness and we have one person with their full Mental Health First Aid Training certificate. FCLI recently became Gold members of the Mental Health Charter, showing our commitment to supporting the wellbeing of our staff and volunteers onsite. Safeguarding is also paramount to us ensuring all children and adults at FCLI are protected, with trained specialists within the team and on the Board.



Charlotte launching Fordhall's Gold Membership of the Mental Health Charter.

All staff have been tremendous in terms of being flexible and working collaboratively as a team throughout this difficult and turbulent year. I thank them whole heartedly for their passion and their continued hard work.

As part of our FCLI Board governance structure, the Board has a process in place to reflect and self-regulate on our own performance. This year we have introduced a set of 'good governance' objectives and we have an annual survey that we each complete, along with asking staff to assess us. Within this, we welcome your feedback, so please do let us know if you have any comments, good or constructive, regarding the governance of the FCLI.

I truly believe we are very fortunate to have such a diverse group of committed Board Members bringing a huge amount of experience and skills to FCLI and I would like to thank all the Board Members for the dedication they have shown and the commitment they have given to FCLI throughout such a difficult year.

This past year has been one that we would never have imagined, but one where we have experienced so much generosity. As Bob, our Treasurer, has also highlighted, your support in the early part of the pandemic ensured our survival when we really didn't know how things would pan out. Your response later to our Appeal for Change was truly amazing! We have also had significant donations for the Cottage Field Campaign. The Board remains supportive of the campaign to win back the 12-acre Cottage Field and continues to investigate avenues to make this possible as the opportunity arises.

I want to say a big personal thank you to you, our shareholders, from all at FCLI. We can't thank you enough for all the continued support you have given.

I also want to thank all our grant funders over the past year who have helped make FCLI such a viable society through very difficult times.

FCLI remains in a strong financial and operational position and we will use this to further the opportunities to use our wonderful landscape to run activities which nurture vital connections between hearts, minds and the soil, for the benefit of us all.

We will also continue to tackle issues around climate change with new determination and with aspirations to help create and encourage sustainable livelihoods for small-scale organic farming.

Thank you all very much.
Christine Tate, FCLI Chair





Treasurer's Report

Looking at it purely from a financial point of view, 2020 has been very successful. Charlotte and the team have taken full advantage of all the government support schemes from furloughing our loyal staff to taking up the hospitality grants to compensate for Arthur's Farm Kitchen (Café) closure, which brought in just over £65,000 to cover our ongoing expenditure. Then, most importantly, we have been the beneficiaries of the generosity of you, our lovely shareholders, to the tune of a further £36,000 in unrestricted donations.

At the tail end of the year, we ran our Appeal for Change, generating a further £25,000, which has been matched by the FCLI Board in the 2021/2022 budget by a further £15,000 from reserves.

We were able to trade to a limited extent through last summer with our Care Farm, the yurts, the Straw Lodge and our community activities, all generating some surpluses.

If you refer to the Income & Expenditure statement, you will see that the net effect of all this activity is a very healthy operating surplus of just under £90,000, leading to a 5.7% increase in the Society's funds.

However, just to drag everyone back down to earth again, it is important to note that three quarters of this surplus has come from government support, and without the Covid-19-specific gifts from shareholders we would have been deep in deficit territory.

There were also significant numbers of shares converted to donations during the period (total value £11,300). This is not new 'cash in the bank' but is a movement from the balance sheet to the income and expenditure report. These donations came following a mailing that Charlotte did reminding members that your shares will form part of your estate on death. Charlotte and the team were encouraging

Whilst most staff were furloughed in the first lockdown, Charlotte and Ben continued to work throughout, ensuring the farm and the shop remained open and accessible for the community.



you to note how you would like these shares managed on your passing, and one option is to donate them back to Fordhall. Whilst some members chose to do that straight away, it is not necessarily our preference. I know the team would love to stay in touch with you as members for as long as possible (if you want to hear from us that is), but noting down your wishes for the future, is really useful for both your family and us when the time comes.



As furlough was not an option for our youth leaders, they were seconded to work on the farm during lockdown one.

Before moving on to talk about 2021, I would like to add a brief word about Unrestricted Reserves (those reserves whose spend is not restricted for any particular purpose). FCLI Board policy is to hold a range of between six and 12 months of operating costs as Unrestricted Reserves, which equates to £100,000 to £200,000. This should allow us to weather storms that cannot be insured against

such as Foot and Mouth outbreaks. We began 2020 with £127,000 in Unrestricted Reserves and ended with £193,000, which, although is healthy, is less than we had originally forecast for the year. (Note: this is not the same number as the 'Cash in hand' line from the published balance sheet as this includes restricted cash, the spending of which is already fixed and allocated.)

From this, the FCLI Board took the decision to allocate £40,000 for capital spend in 2021, which reduced our unallocated funds to £153,000 at the start of 2021 (approximately eight months' running costs).

Now a few words about 2021. Budgeting in a time of Covid-19 has become even more of a 'Dark Art' than usual but, despite this, in January and February, Charlotte and I drew up a budget for 2021. At the time we thought we were being pessimistic by assuming that we would be completely shut down until Easter, and then gradually reopening with social distancing restrictions in place. Well, that's been about right!

With very restricted trading for Arthur's Farm Kitchen, we expect a small deficit after government support for the 2021 year. For the normal trading activities such as the school visits, Youth Project and Care Farm, we expect

Farm Trails remained free and open for the public to access throughout all lockdowns.



surpluses that will support our core running costs. We hope, therefore, better than last year but not back to pre-Covid-19 levels. On the expenditure side, we expect that overhead and administrative expenditure will be down in proportion to our reduced activity at the start of the year.

Distribution of the funds from the Appeal for Change is being discussed following consultation at the AGM, but suffice to say that the implementation of change and growth requires an increase in Fordhall's capacity to receive and support visitors. With this in mind, we plan an extension to and general smartening up of the car park, hopefully to include a couple



of electric car chargers and the purchase of an all-terrain electric scooter to facilitate better disabled access to the farm trails. This will be funded from the £40,000 transferred from Unrestricted Reserves, as highlighted above.

The net effect of all these ins and outs is a small but sustainable operating surplus budget for 2021 of £7,744. Budgeting is difficult enough in normal times, but this realistic and prudent estimate does indicate that we can come through another year of uncertainty with our reserves intact.

Finally, a few thank yous. Perhaps the biggest thanks should go to those kind shareholders whose generosity in the early part of the pandemic ensured our survival, and indeed our continued security. Then, thanks to those who responded to our Appeal for Change, which provides us with great hope for the future. Our many funders have also ensured that not only have we remained open, but additional community support has been offered throughout the period.

Finally, it only remains for me to thank Charlotte, Marie and all the office staff for their sterling work during the year, often in the strangest and most trying of circumstances; and also, of course, my fellow Board Members, particularly those on the Business & Finance sub-committee.

Thank you very much

Bob Griffiths, 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 2020 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.

	2020 (£)	2019 (£)
Operating Income		
Merchandise	482	793
Property rental	14,433	13,900
Events & courses	11,688	4,806
Education	56,262	52,073
Arthur's Farm Kitchen	81,014	137,028
Newsletter	15,166	14,402
Gifts & donations	87,201	56,141
- Legacy income	100	2,630
Gift aid	15,275	12,493
Grants	101,603	236,466
Other income	39,864	2,091
Consultancy	6,265	938
Yurts & Straw Lodge	24,424	14,757
TOTAL Income	453,777	558,518
Operating Costs		
<u>Costs of generating funds</u>		
Merchandise	548	210
Events & courses	9,658	5,428
Advertising & marketing	1,908	4,984
Project delivery	11,373	15,437
Education materials	11,926	7,671
Arthur's FK purchases	35,875	62,330
<u>Management and Administration</u>		
Sub contract sum	-	210
Staff salaries, NIC & pension	209,874	209,878
Travel	158	2,094
Printing & office supplies	15,747	12,334
Accountancy & audit	3,900	3,575
Heat & light	5,493	7,278
Insurance & rates	9,080	8,416
Repairs & maintenance	15,126	5,819
Telephone & internet	1,211	840
Subscriptions	1,234	497
Bank charges	2,296	2,219
Legal & professional	986	750
Staff training	3,458	4,597
Sundry expenses	182	234
Depreciation	23,951	4,357
Unrecoverable VAT	334	-
Total Costs	(363,650)	(359,158)
Operating Surplus	90,127	199,360
Other Interest receivable	246	389
Interest payable	(928)	(1,316)
Surplus/Deficit	89,445	198,443



Your Tenant Farmer's Report

2020 has been a crazy and unpredictable year for us all, with highs and lows and lots of uncertainty,

which we are still seeing now.

At the start of Coronavirus we naively hoped we would have a few months of lockdown and then we would be quickly back up-and-running. We thought all our events would be back open again for the end of the summer. Thinking back now, if I had known how long restrictions would be in place and the impact the pandemic was going to have on the events industry, I'm not sure how I would have managed to process and rationalise it for the farm's event catering business.

In the first 12 months of the pandemic, we saw our event catering income drop by 90%. Thankfully for us, we were not burdened with lots of finance on equipment, and the loans and finance we did have were all able to be temporarily frozen with repayment holidays. Another saving grace was that 2019 had been a bumper year for the business, seeing it grow by 50%, so there was cash in the bank to see us through, along with bounce-back loans and some government grant support in the way of the Local Restrictions Grants and furlough for the staff. These have been essential in keeping our business secure.

On the back of a successful year in 2019, we had planned reinvestment into two new catering trailers and a new catering office. These were all delivered during the first lockdown, and sadly sat idle for months in the field, unused. With lots of cafes and restaurants shut through lockdown we did manage to get a little bit of income by hiring out some of our trailers to other farm shops for takeaway food, although this really just covered some of our costs and was not a terribly profitable exercise.



Initially, it did just help us to maintain some cash in the bank.

Towards the end of summer 2020, we operated a few socially distanced events along with one of the Government Pilots at Edgbaston Cricket Ground in August. Although this ended up being a loss-making exercise as after the first pilot match, Boris announced another lockdown and we had the second event cancelled the night before it was due to open, which left us with stock to fill the freezers and having to absorb all the set-up costs.

However, through the autumn, we had moved into a more settled state and acknowledged we would not open again until summer 2021 at the earliest. We battened down the hatches to reduce any losses. We did manage to open one trailer, The Fordhall Grill, after Christmas, while Arthur's Farm Kitchen was shut, and offered takeaway food from the farm on weekends, which was very successful and was really appreciated by local people. Many walked up to the farm for their daily exercise while getting a takeaway treat of Fordhall grub! We adapted the menu each week to mix it up and offer some variety, and it was great to see local faces week after week.

At the start of summer 2021, it appeared that the restrictions would last for at least another four weeks. This was a big blow for the business, but understandable. It did, however, put the country in a good position to start reopening later in the summer. Despite this, we

managed to operate at the Government Pilot Event at Edgbaston Cricket Stadium in spring 2021. This was a massive success for us, the stadium and all our guest traders. The stadium had 75% capacity with everyone, including our teams, being tested before entry. The crowd clearly felt a sense of relief and excitement to be out and enjoying the live sport. We blew all our forecasts out of the water and spent lots of time trying to get extra stock on site. So, for the catering business, it was a huge success and got some much-needed money in the bank.

The highlight of the last 12 months, though, was winning Best Large Diversification Innovator Award at the British Farming Awards last autumn. We have come a long way since our first farmers' market in 2005 and I am so proud of our team.

Ben celebrating the virtual awards ceremony with his family, from the comfort of the sofa.



Cottage Field

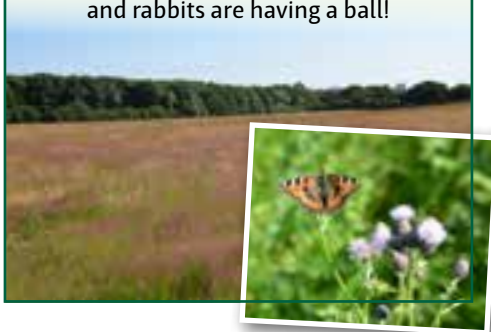
We are still in a very uncertain position with Cottage Field, although I think that, as the landowner sees his hopes of development looking less likely, he has allowed us some very restricted use. We were able to buy the summer hay from the field in 2020 and, more recently, we have been able to graze it with our sheep for six weeks in February and March 2021, neither of which compensate for the loss of the field, but have been very gratefully received.

Cottage Field Note:

It has now been almost two years since we lost access to Cottage Field, in September 2019. The first winter was very wet and, subsequently, very tricky. The fields really suffered.

Since then, Ben has been able to maximise other fields that he rents to limit the impact on the business short term. But even local fields do not compare in quality to Cottage Field.

Nevertheless, in the absence of being managed by us, the land seems to be thriving. The grasses are flourishing, the diversity is growing and the butterflies and rabbits are having a ball!



News from the Farm

Despite all the doom and gloom around the pandemic, the Farm Shop has actually found a whole new audience of local and national customers appreciating all that we do. During the first lockdown, when people's movements were restricted and we were all encouraged to buy online, the online shop became extremely busy with orders increasing ten-fold. Local customers also appreciated the extra steps we put in place within the shop to keep our customers and staff safe.

Our regular video updates were particularly popular and provided people with information on what actions we were taking to keep people



safe, but they also seemed to keep some people upbeat by being able to see what was going on around the farm while they were confined in lockdown. The local and national demand for everything we offer at the farm has continued, albeit at a more manageable rate. Our aim now is to maintain the momentum of interested people by introducing new products and concepts to stay ahead of the game!

During 2020, we put a lot of investment, time and money into the farm and Farm Shop. In the shop we purchased more equipment to help us manage the increased volume of sales, including extra labelling scales and a bigger vacuum packing machine. We also installed more environmentally friendly fridges and freezers, with greater display capacity, enabling us to carry a wider range of stock in the shop and display our products in a much more professional manner.

It was quite fortunate that when our catering events were all cancelled, demand for the farm shop grew, as this meant much of our meat could be sold through the farm shop instead. However, with demand remaining high, we are now looking to develop partnerships with other farms in the region to manage the land and their livestock as we do, organically and pasture-fed. In fact, there is one exciting partnership that I am working on at the moment, which will ensure we can maintain supply to the farm shop. I'll let you know more as this is confirmed.

On a personal level, it's been tough trying to juggle all the uncertainty while trying to support the different teams and the challenges

they have all been facing at work and in their personal lives, but two big positives have come out of the past 12 months for me. Firstly: as a team we have all pulled together across all departments and supported each other in all sorts of ways, which has been great to be part of. I think Fordhall is stronger for that.

Secondly: I have been forced to spend more time on the farm and thoroughly enjoyed having a full summer at home spending more time with the family and focusing on the land. Not only have we welcomed new farm apprentice Eoin to the team, we have also made lots of improvements around the farm over the past 12 months including:

- increasing our sheep flock numbers to 130 breeding ewes.
- laying a new recycled sleeper yard by the cattle sheds using waste sleepers and aggregate from National Rail to reduce erosion in these areas.
- installing 13 new gates (which has made handling the livestock much easier).
- installing over 1,500 metres of new fencing which has allowed us to better manage our wetland meadows.
- Developed new partnerships with other pasture-fed and organically certified farmers to support our growth.

In summary, we have had a very mixed and crazy year, but we are still here and certainly stronger for everything we have been through, so let's focus on the future and hope better times are ahead.

Your Farmer, Ben

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"After a weekend of night shifts this is what I woke up to on valentine's afternoon [Fordhall beef wellington]. All the deliciousness right out of your shop. Thanks for being there through all of this!"
.....

Manager's Report



When I wrote the annual review last year, we were in total lockdown. Most of our staff had been furloughed,

and we had entered a new world of social distancing, cancelling family gatherings and communicating with colleagues and loved ones over Zoom. A year on and we look like we might be finally coming out of the worst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The last 12 months have been turbulent, they have been challenging and they have been filled, in many cases, with sadness. The year has also been a positive wake-up call: new habits have been formed, a new sense of community has evolved and an awareness of what we want from 'life' has been gained. Merging these learnings and an understanding of the power of collective, ground-roots action, we would love to believe that the challenges facing us as a result of Climate Change can also be overcome.

All-in-all, it has fuelled our determination at Fordhall to encourage positive change. In fact, it was the compassion, collaboration and connections that were made throughout the last 12 months which led to our Appeal for Change, run in the latter part of 2020.

It is said that the ability of an organism or a

system to respond and adapt for positive gain, to face challenges in its environment, is the hallmark of resilience. We think Fordhall does – and has done – this pretty well!

We see the links between health, the land and the soil, and we hold close family values and connectedness. We have realised, throughout the pandemic, that we can be doing more to share what we have at Fordhall. We want to nurture resilient people and we want to help encourage a healthy planet.

New systems are needed worldwide and that is now widely recognised. Regenerative agriculture techniques are gaining prominence. Localism is vital. New forms of democratic ownership that re-circulate value back into the local community are growing in momentum. Change is already happening.

There are deep roots in our human instinct for cooperation. We have seen it work at Fordhall in so many ways and on so many occasions. We saw it in 2006 and we have seen it in abundance in 2020.

With Climate Change now our biggest challenge as a human race, we hope that many of these practices continue to grow in both popularity and existence. Most importantly, we will continue to do what we can to further these behaviours, to enthuse our community, and to embed in the hearts of our community an appreciation for our planet. After all, we only have one planet and the power to maintain its health and beauty lies in our hands.



What did your community farm achieve in 2020?

Promoting an understanding that small-scale farming can be in harmony with wildlife and biodiversity.

Following the restoration of the Old Three Ponds, in 2020 we opened them to the public. We also re-opened the Welly Walk and reinstated our seasonal activity trails. All-in-all, we have seen public access to the farm triple throughout the pandemic. We have run bug trails, be a farmer trail, animal homes, bat and moth trails and more will be coming. Not only do our little visitors get an activity pack to do at the farm, but there is also a treat to take home. This could be a bug box, some seeds to grow or some seasonal recipes.



Youth Project team build a Bug Mansion onsite.



Volunteer and Shareholder Maureen Morant from Surrey "Planting a tree is for me an act to heal and grow earth and people".

Children making use of nature's climbing frames on the farm.



Conservation work on the farm has continued, too. With funding from the Severn Trent Biodiversity Booster fund, volunteers have created a new 50sqm spring-fed wildlife

Newt hibernaculums (homes) have been created, grass snake nesting sites built, giant bug hotels take pride of place and bird boxes have gone up, all with the help of our many volunteers, our Youth Project team and our Care Farm, who have all continued to be part of the Fordhall family (outdoors) throughout the pandemic. They have all found the work as therapeutic as we have and many return to the site on a regular basis to see how it is all establishing.

Our tenant farmer, Ben, has also put in over 1,500m of fencing to better manage livestock grazing in the wetland meadows and provide new opportunities for tree planting!

Planting trees is becoming a strong theme across the farm as we develop our Silvopasture (integrating trees into a livestock management system). This process not only provides food for Ben's livestock, but also creates new habitats and opportunities for more carbon to be



Volunteers planted and landscaped the new spring-fed pool.

sequestered into the soil. As we move forward, measuring our carbon footprint will also move up our agenda, with resources being directed into ensuring this is a priority. Whilst we think our carbon footprint is low, there will be areas we can improve. We are keen to investigate these and implement what we can, as soon as we can. The Board has a strong ambition to reach Carbon Zero sooner rather than later. That starts with knowing where we are now!

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

We ran several events (within the restrictions) that helped to promote awareness of food, farming, heritage and the environment. During the summer holidays, when restrictions were lifted, 290 people visited Fordhall specifically through our 'Bubble Clubs'. These were designed to offer an activity such as greenwood working or bush craft in a safe, private, family bubble, thereby creating positive family memories and experiences, despite the challenging times.

Youth Worker, Mike, delivering a Woodland Bubble Club



We joined with Ben's farm team to arrange some larger Covid-safe events such as an autumn Pumpkin Hunt and a spring Picnic with the Lambs. We engaged over 3,750 people throughout these events, all being very carefully timed to ensure numbers onsite at any time were managed, and that social distancing was maintained.

Activities such as volunteering, the yurts,

the Care Farm and the Youth Project resumed at half capacity when they could. We had the new Greenwood Shelter, funded by the Lottery's Awards for All, with a full outdoor kitchen for the Youth Project, which meant we could be entirely based outdoors.

The funding for our Youth Project officially ended in June 2021 and the team is now looking for continuation of funding. Simultaneously, as schools re-opened in March 2021, we saw an unprecedented demand for this service, as well as more complex needs of the young people attending. It is something we are determined to keep open on the farm.



The Pumpkin Hunt was a great success.

Deren has attended the Fordhall Youth Project for a few years now and he is a dab hand with the drill!



School visits, along with residential Cubs and Brownie bookings, were all cancelled in 2020, and whilst some have returned in 2021, we expect most of these to return in full force in 2022. In the meantime, our smaller and regular family activities and seasonal trails will continue.

Have a positive impact on wellbeing through increasing people's connections to nature and the environment.

Through funding from Power to Change and later the National Lottery Community Fund, we have been able to create new opportunities for our local community at Fordhall.

Farm Fridays have become regular opportunities for people to volunteer with practical tasks around the site, and the Afternoon Amble was created to support those suffering from rural isolation and anxiety. We have had an average of nine people attend per week and, according to the evaluations, their health and wellbeing improved by an incredible average of 150%.

"This is just a brief note to express our thanks and appreciation for providing the Friday Amble, Cake and Craft sessions. These have been a lifeline for us and been the highlight of the week.

"With the current circumstances with Covid and the limitations of not seeing loved ones for 12 months, to be able to come along to the farm and form new and very special relationships with new found friends, has been a real shot in the arm.

*"We'd like to thank Caroline and Mike for their care and encouragement and all they have done to make that session very special – they are a real asset and are always cheerful, so helpful when physical problems have got us down. They should be put on prescription! (Every three hours with coffee and cake of course!)." **Paul and Grace***

The success of our Afternoon Amble has led us on to trial some Social Prescribing activities on the farm. Connections have been made with our local Link Worker and GP Practice, and referrals are starting to follow through. Whilst funding for Social Prescribing has to be found by us, we are hoping that the 'proof' of its success will lead on to more

centralised funding in the future, especially if green care initiatives can be proven to reduce anxiety levels and ultimately the need for anti-depressants.

"We have been so grateful that Fordhall stayed open as somewhere to bring the kids so they can get plenty of fresh air and enjoy running about in the fields, such a lovely place".

*"Amazing, well done, as you say this [mental health] is so important! Just to have Fordhall to visit all through lockdown has helped my poor mental health and given me somewhere to escape the pressures of work especially the past year... thank you... Best place in the world ever... it has kept us all sane the past 11 months!" **Sandra***

Last year we introduced our Foodbank Project – 'Good Food, Good People, Good Health', in partnership with the Market Drayton Foodbank, to support their clients by providing therapeutic experiences at Fordhall. These included private family sessions of outdoor cooking, bush craft, natural crafts, nutritional consultations and greenwood working. This work continued into 2021 funded by the Social Enterprise Support Fund. 45 sessions were attended by 93 members of our community, with activity tailored towards each household and their needs. Whilst many had never visited the farm before, repeat visits are now a common occurrence as their association with the farm grows.

The Care Farm, whilst it was closed in lockdown one, soon re-opened offering outdoor services for the remainder of the year and through successive lockdowns. They worked with a smaller ratio of clients to staff and most activities were conducted outdoors. As a result, winter gifts for all our members was a set of thermal underwear! The Straw Lodge provided sanctuary from the worst weather, and with windows open and plenty of space they were still able to cook chutney, bake cakes and even make candles!



Two of our Afternoon Amblers jumping in an ice-covered puddle – they had never done that before! Covid-19 and the Amble created the opportunity to make these experiences possible.



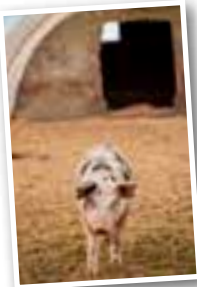
Emlyn baking cakes whilst attending the Care Farm.

We planned that 2020 would be the year to maximise the use of our Straw Lodge; however, sleeping 25 guests in bunk beds was not going to work during a pandemic. So, we contacted Shropshire Council and offered the space for vulnerable members of our community. Children's Services responded and, for most of the summer, it was used as respite accommodation for vulnerable young people and their social workers.

It was hugely rewarding to see these young people, and – indeed – their support workers, getting so much from the natural space provided by this eco-build. We would often see them sat outside watching the pigs wallow in the mud, or beavering away at some baking in the kitchen, or playing cricket in the field. So, whilst they might have been less in number, the impact was certainly evident.

Provide and increase the understanding of good food from local/seasonal produce.

Our Care Farm nurtures a sense of wellbeing whilst building connections to the land and the food that thrives within it. During the now ten years that the Fordhall Care Farm has existed, the adult worker-volunteers (as they like to call themselves), have created raised beds all over the farm. Some grow vegetables, some fruits, some edible flowers



and some offer sanctuaries for the bees. They have also erected a greenhouse, a polytunnel (in 2020) and they manage all of our onsite composting, ensuring all the food waste from Arthur's Farm Kitchen is composted in our Hot Composter and carefully distributed within the garden to support soil life and plant growth.

The new polytunnel has extended the growing season for the Care Farm group and facilitated their expansion. As a result, the Care Farm has doubled in size and now operates four days a week.



The seasons are very much part of Care Farm life. They sow seeds, weed, mulch, harvest, mulch again and – best of all – they cook; whether it be celebratory pizzas and salad in the outdoor bread oven, jam and chutney making in the Straw Lodge, or cooking a Christmas Dinner with their rich pickings, not many on the farm are closer to the soil, food and health than those attending our Care Farm. We hope to take their knowledge a step further by arranging some sessions with our resident nutritionist, Kate, throughout the forthcoming year.

Felicity picking flowers in the Community Garden



We have also joined a pilot project to utilise BRIX monitors to ascertain the nutritional density of the food we grow. We are at the very early stages of this project so there is not a lot to report yet, but we will be sure to let you know what we find out!

Nutritional training is being integrated into all facets at Fordhall. We have already completed training with our youth team, who learnt about foods that can affect anxiety in young people and build emotional resilience; and then with our café team, who learnt the art of fermentation and the importance of gut health to all aspects of bodily function.

These were very successful and soon resulted in Kimchi playing a part in salads in Arthur's Farm Kitchen. Outdoor cooking stepped up a gear with the youth team, too, as they cooked curries, soups and stews in the winter months. It has been so rewarding to see how much the young people have enjoyed the process themselves.



Cooking outside became the norm for the Youth Project.

So-much-so that the temporary outdoor kitchen, which was created due to the pandemic, will soon be made into a permanent feature. Some investment is needed (we are currently looking for about £2,500 to cover the costs), but outdoor cooking is clearly something that will be here to stay for the youth team, through the hail, the wind and the sunshine.

Arthur's Farm Kitchen was closed for much of 2020 due to the lockdowns and many restrictions. We did open when we could, and for 12 months we also offered 'eat at home' Sunday Lunches, which were collected or delivered free of charge to members of our local community who were isolating or shielding. They were tremendously valued and ensured that newly recruited and much awaited Chef, Richard, was able to remain employed throughout the pandemic. His seasonal menus changed fortnightly to reflect the seasons, and many said they were the highlight of their week.

As demand from the Farm Shop soared, new local producers were sought. Many local suppliers, who had seen their restaurant trade stop overnight, jumped at the opportunity to supply the Farm Shop and together ensured the range of fresh food available never dwindled. New partnerships were formed including with local egg suppliers and, for a time, we had an organic milk vending machine at the farm, which was hugely popular.

Influence innovative approaches to using farming assets and the land for the benefit of the community.

Charlotte's consultancy work understandably slowed as activity across the world slowed down. Nevertheless, Charlotte still offered remote support to Jubilee Farm, a wonderful community-owned farm in Northern Ireland, who were looking to fundraise for some new processing sheds for their community growing project.

Most recently, Charlotte was asked by EIT Food (Europe's leading food innovation initiative, working to make the food system more sustainable, healthy and trusted) to join one of their discussion groups. The title: 'Making our food system more sustainable – Leave no-one behind'.

EIT Food is collaborating with the UN Food Systems Summit 2021, into which all of these ideas will be fed and consolidated. A great platform, indeed, and we hope the messages of small-scale, sensitive farming connected to



to learn from our example.

The movement is most certainly growing, and, as we emerge from lockdown, the enquiries for Charlotte's expertise continue to grow. Plans for 2021 include Charlotte completing her certification as a Community Shares Practitioner, which will expand our reach further.

local communities can be shared as a viable way of life for generations to come.

Meanwhile, we continue to work with partners at the Plunkett Foundation who link Charlotte up with community projects wanting



Wendy with Heather the Highland.

Case Study:

"Why I love working at Fordhall" by Wild and Woody Wendy

1. I get to be part of people's 'first' moments all the time! I get to toast a marshmallow with a child who has never done it before and when I see their face when they eat it, it just makes me smile! I get to see children and young people giggle as they climb their first tree. I get to see young people crack their first eggs and make their first omelettes.
2. One of the things I love is coming up with an idea and being able to run with it, and Fordhall is so very supportive of this. It's always encouraging new ideas and more innovative ways to do things. Rather than say "We can't do that", Fordhall says "How can we make that happen?" This approach is refreshing and positive and makes me feel valued as an individual, and that my ideas and thoughts matter. I have never worked
- anywhere before where I have been given so much creative freedom and it's a testament to Charlotte, Ben and the whole team.
3. I get to be part of people's happy moments every day. In my mind I always start my day with a kind of personal challenge, which is to send people home at the end of the day happier than when they arrived. In my eyes that's the success. It's the building up of someone's self-esteem, their confidence, upskilling people, encouraging social interactions between people and groups, delving a little bit into people's lives and listening to their stories. When someone comes out with "I am so happy today being here", it just makes everything that I do here beyond worthwhile. It makes me happy.

Monitoring and Evaluation

After starting the year with a strong plan to develop our evaluation techniques, and with drafts of our theory of change in place, this was all put on hold as the staff navigated lockdowns, opening up, lockdowns, opening up, and so forth.

Nevertheless, throughout the year, we did start to review our strategy, and within that we looked at our decision-making process. A special Board Meeting was held in October to deliberate the balance between making a surplus and generating impact.

It could be easy with the demand for weddings rising, for example, to focus much of our energy on these income generating activities and, as a consequence, the facilities that we require for our community projects would no longer be available.

A balance has to be reached and understanding where this balance will be is

not necessarily straight forward. It will involve some trial and error, and it will involve careful evaluation of all our activities, ensuring each one delivers towards our charitable and social aspects, whilst together maintaining our financial security and some reserves for re-investment.

Understanding the balance and adjusting our decisions accordingly will be key in where Fordhall goes next. As a result, we have pledged additional resources for the next year to develop our impact management strategy and processes. We hope that, by the end of the forthcoming year, we will have good measures and a structure in place. Using these measures, we will be able to balance our future decisions and make judgements on the right projects and the size of those projects as we move forward.

After all, we only have one Fordhall, and we want to make sure that, whilst our negative impact on the planet is low, the positive impact on our community and our environment remains as high as possible.

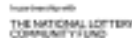


Thank you to all of our fantastic volunteers in 2020

These amazing people together clocked up 1,471 volunteer hours throughout 2020. Huge thanks go to the 74 super stars:

Alexandar Allan, Andrew Bailey, Emma Bates, Jane Bayliss, Lawrence Bebbington, Paul Bishop, Grace Bishop, Dan Bridgewater & Claire, Luke Cheshire, Neil Clark, Jezy Davies, Brendan Evans, Isabel Evans, Vivienne Finney, Dylan Franklin, Nina Garmson, Bob Griffiths, William Hawkings, Bethany Hawkings, Charlotte Hollins, Ben Hollins, Jamie Hollins, David Holton, Penny Holton, John Hughes, Denise Hunt, Jill Jones, Rob Jones, Gary Kanes, Ruth King, Sarah Knowles, Elaine Lewis, Anthony Lewis, Shirley Manning, Kraig McLeod, Lesley McNeil, Sian Mercer, Rick Miller, Maureen Morant, Christopher Mould, Isabella Natrins, Rob Park, Mike Perry, Nicholas Phillips, Dominic Pinto, Brendan Price, Richard Priestley, David Proctor, Isaac Radford, Pat Raynor, Paul Raynor, Caroline Rose, Kathryn Rhodes and Jane, Dilys Riley, Peter Riley, Wynn Roberts, Rosalyn, Nathan Rous, Sarah Smith, Rebecca Syrett, Chris Tate, Jack Tavenor, Barrie Taycer, Leda Tustin, George Vyse, Sharon Vyse, Henry Vyse, Viv Watkins, Chris White, Emily White, Ginne Wollaston, Jason Wright, Staff at Hains Watts Berkhamsted.

Thank you to our funders in 2020



Big Lottery – Our Bright Future Programme (Growing Confidence, Youth Project), **National Lottery Coronavirus Community Support Grant** (Afternoon Amble and Farm Fridays), **Power to Change** (Emergency Trading Income Support Scheme), **Social School for Entrepreneurs Trade-Up** (Core Costs), **Shropshire Council** (Hospitality and Leisure Grants), **Groundwork UK** (Outdoor Toddler Group), **Social Enterprise Support Fund** (Foodbank Project).

We would also like to acknowledge the generous support from our wider community and all those who have left us a gift in their Will, or have pledged to do so in the future.

Our successes are shared with you all.



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

Opening Times:

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



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