

The Shallowford Trust Newsletter



Dear Friends,

As the rain on Dartmoor continues with its relentless hammering, making dim the memories of cheerful sunshine, we have to pinch ourselves and remember the horrors of the dry summer which left the reservoirs precipitously dry.

Ellie, our **Conservation Officer** has begun the long process of writing her final report for the Heritage Lottery, Green Recovery grant. As she trawls through the statistics and data, up popped her head with a question, 'I have to log all the issues which made implementation difficult. It's all about the weather!' Rain, making sludgy, sticky glue that sucked wellies so viciously into the earth our visitors could barely stand up. Then autumnal pelting, sideways sleet that made working in the new and wonderful raised beds almost impossible for weeks and weeks. Not to be deterred, groups were toggled up in green waterproofs and whisked into the poly tunnel. Dartmoor will never dent our human determination!



The **Green Recovery Project** is due to be completed in March 2023 having brought in 74 new groups and 1,481 day visitors to the farm within one year alone (total number of visitor days at the farm in the Covid year of 2020 was 459. In 2022 combined residential and day visits we hosted 5,241 visitor days!).



Although combining Conservation Work and Farming has always been core to our strategy, employing Ellie and being able to practically combine the two under the umbrella of applied strategies for Climate Change mitigation has been fantastic. Young visitors who would otherwise exclaim 'Yuk' at seeing a knotty entangled web in the grass suddenly yell with delight, 'I've found something' and run for a magnifying glass. Instead of stamping on a spider, even the most squeamish have been brave enough to cup their hands and move one (generally the smallest) to a safe space outside.

Encouraging and developing curiosity before children reach the scary teenage years is critical. Providing tools to enable that curiosity and responsibility to flourish is essential if we are to help the next generation remain positive in what seems to be a world heavily loaded with negativity.

We are taking the **Farm to the City**, up to **Providence House in Battersea from 5th - 10th June** this year with the aim of bringing our wonderful moorland farm and wild life into the realms of London. If anyone is

available to visit or bring a group, please let us know as soon as possible. Ellie will be with us despite the Green Recovery Project having been completed. We need funding to keep her within our team and are looking for new grants to support transport and salaries in the coming months to increase the overall number of groups that visit. Again, we have gaps for schools and various groups this coming year. You are reading this – you probably know the magic a week at Shallowford can impact on an individual, but it requires an already stretched teacher or group leader to plan, organise and implement a visit. We understand it is a lot to ask. However,



the benefits? We have no doubt that the seeds sown in one short week last a lifetime. **Can you help us find more groups** now that we have places for up to 32 people? Small groups are wonderful, but many schools need us to be able to take a full class – we have the privilege of being able to work with small or large groups and are only slowly nudging into a world of youth groups and teachers that have never heard of us. More to the point, now we have new barns, we can work all year round!

January 2023

Work experience! We were really pleased to receive four young lads over the summer period, all requesting work experience. Three came through school programmes and one visited from Hungary to improve his English whilst discovering the delights of a hard working hill farm!



In August, Arthur joined us as a resident volunteer for a year, learning the wonders not only of pigs, chickens, scrub clearing, hedge laying, drystone walling and ditch digging, but, the all important, 'how to clean a toilet, iron and fold the laundry'. Life skills! He also, just happens to make an exceptionally good cottage pie!

Our **volunteers** have been, as always, necessary and absolutely brilliant. I realised I have not taken any photos of the five gallant painters who set to work on the house, repainting the dining room and the corridor. Garden work, the veggie patch, poly tunnel and the lawns have been lovingly tended, whilst the determination of one particular lady to attack the weekly pile of ironing gains a note of awe! All we can say is a wee thank you!



Having said that, an incredible number of people turned up to help us this year at **Widcombe Fair**. Sadly, it rained on the day and visitors to the Fair were slightly lower than normal, but we raised nearly £4,000 which is critical untargeted funding that is essential for paint and other general maintenance required to keep us spik and span!

We have also run a whole ream of courses: three dry stone walling, hedge laying, wild flower, moth nights, bat nights, butterfly events, hay meadow seed spreading, tree seed collection all combining again, farming and conservation, practically working with both young people and adults to improve skills and general knowledge.



We have also gained **two ponies**, one of whom will just about let you do anything to him, the other is somewhat nervous, being wild and spirited! The result is an interesting challenge for those young people who are nervous and those who gradually grow in confidence. Having mastered the smell of pigs, the delight of the ponies is wonderful as we watch the growth of each individual within the group.

As well as having our normal visitors the farm, we are also working weekly with some young people from a local exclusion unit, aiming to complete the **John Muir Award** as they master a range of outdoor activities and experiences. We had a couple of groups from dementia homes and a whole host of special needs and just plan good old youth groups over the summer.



As we enter 2023, we still have to complete the electrics in the new barns and continue with that horrible term, 'marketing'. Perhaps, 'outreaching' to new schools and places that have never heard of us sounds better? We are working on some patrons as well. Our new **Website** is not quite finished but up and running, with the aim of filming a new video in the spring. So please have a look and nudge some of your local groups and schools. In the meantime, Ellie will be visiting some schools with David to

plant seeds and trees and I'm off to talk with a few WI groups. Will seems to have a never ending list of farm maintenance jobs, we need a cook and more cleaners. Then we are preparing for our eight back to back groups in spring! This is the mad time of year, full of fun, spoddle ploughing, night walks, lambing and the Shallowford challenges! Please do contact us if you would like to rent the Ark or visit: julia@shallowfordfarm.co.uk. New website: Shallowfordfarm.co.uk