Year 3

19th November 2015 to
18th November 2016





Greenham Reach

Annual Monitoring Report

ECOLOGICAL LAND CO-OPERATIVE

Report prepared by the Ecological Land Co-operative detailing progress to date against the aims and objectives of our site Management Plan for Greenham Reach smallholdings.









Top row: *The Greenham Reach Smallholders (left to right) James Dexter and Sukamala, Wild Geese Acres; Stuart and Helen Kearney, Elder Farm; Ruth O'Brien and Alex Wilson, Steepholding*

Bottom: *Veg beds, Steepholding*

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ACKNOWLEGEMENTS

With many thanks to the Greenham Reach smallholders for their help in compiling the information for this report, and for the use of their original photographs.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report relates to Greenham Reach, the Ecological Land Co-operative's (ELC) first project. Greenham Reach is a cluster of three affordable smallholdings in Greenham, Mid Devon.

The ELC offered the smallholdings on long-term tenure to three ecological food and herb producers, subject to compliance with a rigorous site Management Plan. Although each smallholding operates as a separate business, the ELC has overall responsibility for compliance with the terms of both the Management Plan and the planning permission (i.e. the planning conditions) and we work with the smallholders to ensure that this is achieved. The Management Plan can be accessed via our website, www.ecologicalland.coop.

This report is structured to reflect the objectives and requirements outlined in the site Management Plan. The principal aims of the Plan are to: maintain and enhance the habitats and species diversity; maintain and enhance the landscape quality; and facilitate the provision of low-impact livelihoods and an increase in productivity, without prejudice to the first two aims.

This report is the third annual evaluation of how we have performed against the aims and objectives set out in the Management Plan. The report is structured following the themes used in the Management Plan and details activities at the site in the third year since our temporary five year planning permission was granted (19th November 2015— 18th November 2016).

We continue to be very happy with progress at Greenham Reach to date. This development serves as a great example of small scale, low impact land use in the UK, allowing new entrants to farming affordable access to land. The land has continued to produce well and the smallholders are becoming more established and connected to the land.

Despite fears from a few quarters that the soil in this location would not support horticulture, we have been very pleased to see an abundance of high quality horticultural produce from the holdings. This growing productivity, coupled with the strong demand for produce of this kind, is very encouraging for the future of our smallholders at Greenham Reach.

The contents of this report are true and accurate to the best of our knowledge. The work described represents our best efforts, for the generations that follow.

Dated: 30/01/2017

ABOUT THE ECOLOGICAL LAND CO-OPERATIVE

The Ecological Land Co-operative (ELC) is a social enterprise, established to address the lack of affordable sites for ecological land-based livelihoods in England. We work to address a range of complex and deep-rooted social and environmental challenges in a uniquely simple, pragmatic way: by removing barriers to land access for sustainable uses.

Our mission and core business is the creation of residential smallholdings aimed at new entrants to horticulture and mixed farming, and we protect our sites for affordability and ecological agricultural use in perpetuity. Greenham Reach is our first cluster of smallholdings.

Our vision is of a living, working countryside, providing sustainable rural livelihoods to smallholders alongside a range of benefits to communities and ecosystems. Small-scale ecological production protects the environment and reduces greenhouse gas emissions by reducing fossil fuel use. Such businesses help build a vibrant, living countryside in which people flourish alongside our cherished landscapes and natural biodiversity, and have a crucial role to play in ensuring food and energy security. They also provide employment, access to local, sustainable food and crafts and educational opportunities for urban visitors, helping to maintain rural skills and to improve ecological literacy.

Our model is to create small clusters of smallholdings. This helps us to keep costs down through the provision of shared infrastructure, shared planning applications and subsequent site monitoring, and allows the smallholders to work together and provide mutual support.

For more information about our work and future plans please visit our website, www.ecologicallland.coop

ABOUT GREENHAM REACH

Our co-operative's first project is a cluster of three affordable smallholdings for new entrants to ecological agriculture, located in Devon. A 5-year temporary planning permission[1] was granted for the project in 2013, allowing us to use our 22 acre greenfield site for three farm businesses including constructing a barn, track and three temporary residential agricultural workers' dwellings, each tied to an agricultural holding of between 5.5 and 8.5 acres.

Since then, the three smallholding families have been developing their businesses. **Elder Farm** is a business centred around herb production; **Wild Geese Acres** focuses on intensive salad production and has recently expanded to include sheep and pigs; and **Steepholding** is a mixed enterprise including fruit, a veg box scheme and a micro dairy herd of Golden Guernsey goats.

For more information about Greenham Reach, please visit our website, www.ecologicalland.coop

1 The permission can be viewed by going to the Planning Portal - www.planningportal.gov.uk - and searching for appeal 2181808, 2181821 and 2181807.



Photo: Salad beds, Wild Geese Acres

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

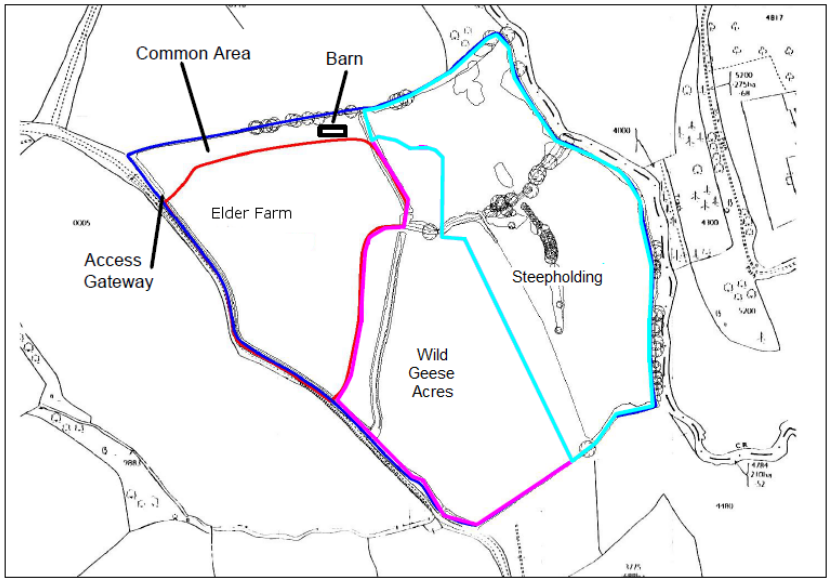
Summary

Management Plan Objective: *'It is important that Greenham Reach will maintain and enhance Mid Devon's typical landscape character and features as well as the specific nature of the locality and site itself.'*

We continue to be broadly satisfied that site management has delivered on the objectives of the Management Plan in this area. The landscape at Greenham Reach continues to be protected and enhanced while having undergone considerable changes following the establishment of the smallholdings. The growing range of agricultural activities on the holdings mean an increasing range of habitats and biodiversity.

VISUAL AMENITY

Greenham Reach occupies a south and easterly facing slope of 22 acres, descending down from an unclassified lane to the banks of the river Tone. The site is made up of three plots called Elder Farm (5.5 acres), Wild Geese Acres (6.9 acres) and Steepholding (8.5 acres).



Agricultural production continues to develop across the site and perennial trees and crops are growing on well in general, despite occasional setbacks. Wild Geese Acres and Elder Farm in particular have seen an expanded area come into productive use this year.

The range of caravans across the site has remained the same as last year, with some extra building infrastructure on Steepholding to house the goats. These manmade structures do have an impact on the look of the fields but they are all small-scale and not out of proportion with the extent of farm operations.

Moreover, as the numerous trees and hedges grow taller, this infrastructure will be hidden and the impact should soften further. Some of the caravans now have wooden cladding as an additional measure to reduce visual impact.

PARISH COUNCIL STATEMENT

In accordance with our Management Plan, we invited Holcombe Rogus Parish Council to visit the site and comment on the progress of the development to date. A council representative had not yet visited the site during the period covered by this report, and as such we have no comments from the Parish Council to report this year.



Photos: This page: wooden cladding to residential caravan; facing page: new fencing and maturing hedge on Wild Geese Acres.

HEDGEROWS

The existing hedgerows are all in good condition. Elder Farm has carried out two areas of hedge management: thinning along the inside of the roadside hedge and coppicing an area behind their dwelling. Wild Geese Acres has opened a narrow gap in the internal hedge to allow easier access between the two fields. The planted hedgerows across the site are all growing well, in some cases showing excellent rates of growth.

TREES

No major trees were felled. Considerable new tree planting has occurred as part of the farm businesses, both native species to become woodland and crop bearing trees. The establishment of the planted trees along the access track is patchy in places but other trees are growing well there, particularly the red alder.

GRASSLAND

The less valuable grassland area continues to slowly reduce as it comes under more intensive management. The riverside meadow on Steepholding was topped in late summer, as was the large field on Wild Geese Acres. The unimproved meadow on Steepholding has been grazed by goats in accordance with the ecologist's recommendations, and bramble cover has been knocked back significantly there. The ecologist report was satisfactory and comments that *'the grassland is still of high ecological significance'.*

RIVERSIDE

No significant work has taken place along the water's edge.

WASTE MANGEMENT

Waste continues to be managed well, with no reports of any problems.

INVASIVE SPECIES

The Himalayan balsam has persisted to some extent along the riverside, but is noticeably less present this year. It is being well manged by Steepholding. No other invasive species problems have been observed.



ECOSYSTEMS AND BIODIVERSITY

Summary

Management Plan Objective: *'The enhancement of the site's existing ecosystem and biodiversity.'*

We have once again assessed site progress in this area through the following indicators:

- Overall ecological health of the site as described in an ecologist's survey. This compared the site's flora with the results of the survey conducted the year before;
- Prevalence of invasive species; and
- Visits and observations by ELC directors.

As for last year, all of the main habitat remains well cared for: the hedgerows, riverside, grassland and trees are all in good health. We are satisfied that the site management complies with the Management Plan in this area.

The ecologist's report this year confirmed that the relevant habitats are all in good health. The valuable MG5C unimproved meadow has seen slight increases of some herbs, with an 11% overall increase from last year, which is good news.

Biodiversity is likely to have increased or been stable, notwithstanding the effects of different weather patterns. No issues of flooding or erosion were seen in 2016 and the different habitats are slowly beginning to establish themselves.

The full text of the 2016 ecologist's report is available on request.



Photo: ***Nursery beds, Elder Farm***

SOIL FERTILITY

Summary

Management Plan Objective: *'To stimulate microbiological life in the soil and improve soil fertility, and then to maintain good soil fertility and microbiological life indefinitely.'*

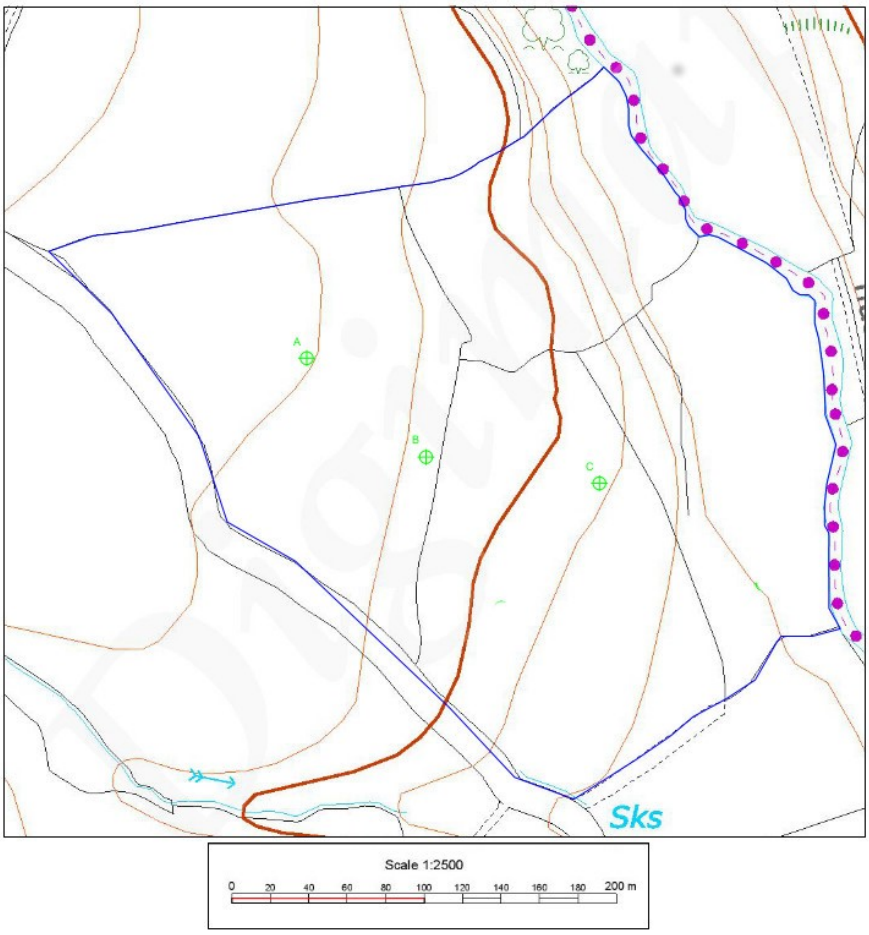
We have again assessed site progress against this objective via soil tests from independent analysts, plus our own soil tests and monitoring. Nearly all parts of the site are under permanent vegetative cover and there is very low stocking density. There are no apparent problems with management practices. We are happy that the soil at Greenham Reach is being well cared for.

This year we took four soil tests for lab analysis (NRM Laboratories), in addition to our own observations. There are no signs of pollution, erosion or poisons and no sign of overstocking. We are happy that the soil across the site is being well cared for.

With our limited resources and only a few years of data so far, we cannot offer a detailed analysis of soil changes (although we remain keen to work with an organisation that could do this with us).

Our four tests for lab analysis were:

Map showing location of soil samples



Greenham Reach
soil tests
1:2500

Sample A: from the middle of Elder Farm's field
Sample B1: from the first established veg beds on Wild Geese Acres
Sample B2: from the newer vegetable beds on Wild Geese Acres, beyond the pond
Sample C: from Steepholding's market garden, in the middle of the upper area

The lab tested for pH, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium and organic matter

Sample A: The pH level has gone down very slightly from last year, while the phosphorus, potassium and magnesium levels are all very similar to 2015. This is consistent with the test being taken from a point with no agricultural activity, as this point had not yet been planted at the time of sampling. This could therefore be said to represent a possible benchmark or control sample of what this ex-arable field soil would be like at GR had there been no changes in management. (A lower pH indicates a higher acidity.)

Sample B1: This shows broadly similar results to 2014, but much lower levels than 2015. This perhaps shows that last year's results were a little anomalous and possibly the result of a high manure/compost element. We will have to wait for further years of data to make a firm judgement.

Sample B2: The difference between the older and newer vegetable beds on WGA are not large, but there is a higher pH and lower organic matter content on the older beds.

Sample C: The tests this year show much higher levels of pH and all three minerals than those recorded in 2014, but broadly similar to 2015. The exception to this was phosphorus, which has decreased by 50% from 2015.

Across all the tests from currently productive areas, the levels of organic matter tested by a 'loss on ignition' test. Results this year were higher than for 2014, showing 6.9 to 9.4%. In broad terms we are using this figure to indicate carbon content. These are satisfactory figures, given that they show we are certainly not depleting soil or organic content – better than that, we are slowly building soil, as we would hope to from ecologically sound practices. Higher organic matter means more soil life, which is both more resilient to change and more productive, and more carbon means more sequestration potential, helping to reduce the problems of climate change.

Full soil test report from NRM Laboratories is available on request.

STOCKPROOFING AND SOIL EROSION

No erosion problems have been identified.

Wild Geese Acres has put in hundreds of meters of new stock fence in the big field this year, and the rest of the existing fencing across the site is in sound condition.

COMPOSTING, MANURE MANAGEMENT AND COMPOST TOILETS

There are no reports of problems with waste or compost management, and human waste ('humanure') continues to be stored until composted and then distributed appropriately to support the growth of woodland trees and hedges around the holdings. Please see previous reports for more information on the use of humanure.

WATER

Summary

Management Plan Objective: *'Water is not only the basis for the ecological health of the site, its quality is important in order to avoid the potential for damaging contamination either of site water or of nearby watercourses.'*

There is no sign of Greenham Reach causing downstream pollution issues. Water management does remain an issue for the site as a whole with the variable rainfall patterns and heavy soils across all the fields. Further development of infrastructure and businesses means that the quantity of rainfall collected by our rainwater harvesting system at the shared barn has not met the needs of the site and the new borehole has been in periodic use.

GREY WATER TREATMENT

As last year, the volumes of grey water produced continue to be very low and non-toxic. Water is disposed of around the site, particularly onto planted willow areas and other trees. Funding has been gained to create a system that is able to handle larger volumes in the future, as grey water will increase as on-site food processing develops over the coming years.

WATER USE

Water has continued to be collected from temporary dwelling and shed roofs to supplement the main supply harvested from the roof of the shared barn, which includes 20,000 litres of water storage and particulate and UV filtration to ensure potable standard. The barn roof feeds water storage for domestic (i.e. non-agricultural) consumption, but rainfall has not been consistent enough for this system to supply all needs on its own. A borehole was installed early in the year to top up domestic water requirements, and water has been pumped into the storage tanks at intervals according to need, in turn causing an extra load on the solar electricity system. The well continues to be used as a back-up source of irrigation in addition to rainwater harvesting from building and caravan roofs.

The extra usage of borehole extracted water has also led to an additional filtration process. MDDC's environmental health department tested the water in the summer and found there was a level of manganese marginally over the designated limit. This meant that extra filters were needed, causing extra expense and power needs. The water was tested again in October and found to be satisfactory for domestic use.

An improved drainage situation across the whole site, allowing the storage of water for periods of drought and to take water away from growing and living areas at times of heavy rain, remains desirable when resources allow.

SECURE STORAGE OF CHEMICALS

The small number of potentially hazardous chemicals (including WD40, bike oil and hydraulic oil) continue to be stored in the barn. The barn also stores the batteries (part of the off-grid solar electricity system) in a locked room, although there are plans to move these to a purpose built shelter to the rear of the barn to facilitate better use of the barn space for the smallholders.

ENERGY, CARBON EMISSIONS AND BIO-SEQUESTRATION

Summary

Management Plan Objective: *'Sustainable development requires that households use significantly less fossil fuel… the ELC [also] aims for it sites to be exemplars of bio-sequestration (the absorption and storage of carbon dioxide).'*

Electricity needs continue to be largely met by the solar electricity generation system based at the communal barn, and heating is provided by biomass (wood). Fossil fuel use by smallholders mainly comprises road vehicles, a tractor and a generator to supplement the solar electricity supply in the winter months. We are satisfied that the site management complies with the Management Plan in this area.

ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINTING

Ecological footprinting will next take place in the fifth year of monitoring, as a comparison with the baseline study commissioned prior to our smallholders moving to Greenham Reach. No additional support in lowering ecological footprint was requested by the smallholders.

ENERGY USE/ SOLAR ARRAY

The 4.32kw solar electricity generation system installed on the barn roof continues to supply electricity for the site. The old generator was replaced with a new one and has continued to supplement the power needs across the site. The control panel for the solar array was moved from one location to another (both inside the barn) due to space constraints, and a small exterior shelter to house the batteries was prepared behind the barn, to allow for more processing space inside the building. Solar power has continued to supply the vast majority of electricity needs on site, but wind power is needed to cover times of low sunlight, to supply the required volume of power for those living on site.



Photo:Rainwater storage tanks storing rainwater run-off from the barn roof and treated by a micro-particulate and ultra-violet water filter.

The total power generated to date by the solar panels was 9007.8 kWh as of September 2016.

EDUCATION IN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES TO CONTRIBUTE TO BIO-SEQUESTRATION

Overall the whole site continues to see extensive tree growth and the creation of numerous perennial growing areas. The key for biosequestration (soaking up carbon from the atmosphere) is extensive perennial plantings and good soil management; on both these aspects Greenham Reach is a great model given the high levels of production in operation there.

There is limited fossil fuel use in the agricultural activity on site; for instance, in topping the fields, moving bulky goods and so on. A small amount of ploughing has taken place this year to create broadscale growing areas on Elder Farm. Overall this is a commendably low level of fossil fuel use - a lot of the energy input here is human labour.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

Summary

> **Management Plan Objective:** *'The ELC believes that animals should be managed with care for their welfare and health. As set out by The Farm Animal Welfare Council, animals should be managed in such a way that they enjoy the "five freedoms" (freedom from: malnutrition; physical discomfort and extremes of temperature; injury and disease; fear and distress; and unnecessary restrictions of behaviour).'*
>
> There have been no reports of animal mistreatment or cruelty. We are satisfied that site management complies with the Management Plan in this regard.

Steepholding have developed their goat herd and now have 11 Golden Guernsey goats with ongoing milk production for domestic use as they continue to develop plans for a commercial small-scale dairy and cheese making operation. They have replaced their flock of hens after a fox caused serious losses in the summer.

Wild Geese Acres has taken on ten Shetland sheep for grazing the main field, with plans to purchase five Gloucester Old Spot pigs, due to arrive in December 2016, just outside the period that this report covers. There is also a small flock of hens.

Elder Farm continues to house a small flock of hens, with Pilgrim geese recently added to their flock.

CONSTRUCTION

Summary

Management Plan Objective: *'Constructed dwellings should meet at least Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes'*

At the time of writing this report the smallholders had not yet constructed dwellings or submitted plans for their dwellings. The agricultural barn can be simply dismantled if necessary. As detailed in last year's report, it has become clear that the Code for Sustainable Homes is not suitable for measuring the sustainability of straw-bale self-built housing, the preferred construction method at Greenham Reach. In addition, the Code was itself withdrawn by the UK government in 2015. We continue to seek a suitable alternative standard.

There have been few additional structures constructed at Greenham Reach over the last year. The main one to note is the goat shed on Steepholding. This is for shelter, storage and milking and has been in continual use most of the year. It is a timber post and beam construction erected mainly by Alex Wilson. Like the other timber buildings it can simply be removed in the event that the development needs to be reversed.

The other constructions on site (in addition to the barn) remain the polytunnels, with 2016 seeing two additional tunnels erected on Elder Farm and the completion of the Wild Geese Acres polytunnel; and the tool sheds, compost toilets and animal shelters.



Photo: *New timber frame goat shed on Steepholding*

ANNUAL OPEN DAY

Summary

Management Plan Objective: *'The objective of the annual open day is to spread understanding of the ELC's approach to sustainable agriculture and living.'*

The Management Plan requirement for annual open days to be held at Greenham Reach applies from the second year of development onwards.

An open day was held in early October 2016. In addition, Steepholding hosted a CSA social as part of setting up their new CSA scheme, and there were numerous visits from other groups and courses - these included Shift Bristol, Exmoor Hill Farmers Association, Blackdown Hills Transition group, and Sharpham Trust. Elder Farm received students from Lincoln University, started the herbal apprenticeship and has given numerous talks to local Women's Institute and other groups. Wild Geese Acres continued to host numerous volunteers and visitors. As a whole, Greenham Reach continues to generate much interest and involvement from the local community.

SCHOOL VISITS

Summary

Management Plan Objective: *Sharing the ELC's approach to sustainable agriculture and low impact living.'*

There were no school visits in 2016 despite attempts to arrange them. Local schools had arranged other trips this year, and given the needs of setting up the farm businesses, such visits were not a high priority for Greenham Reach this year meaning that contact with schools was not made until later in the school year. This is an understandable situation, but the Greenham Reach holdings and the ELC are agreed that earlier attempts need to be arranged next year to set up such visits, and we hope for a successful outcome.

It should also be noted that the Management Plan only requires school visits to be hosted from year two of the development onwards, and that the smallholders voluntarily ran school visits in their first year on site. This means that Greenham Reach has still hosted two rounds of school visits in the first three years of the project, as originally intended.

Although there were no school visits this year, the site did host other educational visits, as listed above in the 'Open Day' section.

TRANSPORT

Summary

Management Plan Objective: *'The project provides an integrated livelihood and residential scheme which will by its very nature result in a low traffic development. However, smallholders will be limited on the number of vehicles on site and number of vehicle journeys.'*

We have assessed site progress against this objective via traffic counter data (as stipulated in the Management Plan) and a count of the number of vehicles kept on site, as detailed below.

TRAFFIC COUNT

The count for the year was 4,384. This is equivalent to around four journeys per holding per day (i.e. two return journeys).

Although higher than our original target in 2013, this is well below average household traffic movements. In February this year we asked MDDC to increase our traffic allowance to 4,380 vehicle movements for the remaining years of our temporary permission. We said:

> *"It's evident that our original traffic allowance was too ambitious. We feel that the allowance of 2 return journeys per day encourages responsible vehicle use whilst providing the smallholders with enough vehicle movements to meet their business and family needs as well as hosting open days, work days and school visits."*

In discussion MDDC have since replied that they will consider all matters such as this at the end of the current period of temporary permission, ending in 2018.

Given the sparse nature of public transport in the area, and the need to have a functioning business and a family life, we view these figures as being exemplary.

Full traffic count data is available on request.

VEHICLE NUMBERS

The Management Plan allows for a maximum of four vehicles to be owned and kept on site overnight at Greenham Reach. This continues to be adhered to.

TRAFFIC ADVISOR

We have spoken to all smallholders regarding traffic numbers but have not engaged a specific traffic advisor to offer further guidance.

Photos (opposite): left, Helen Kearney and flower beds, Elder Farm; top right, James Dexter in the Wild Geese Acres polytunnel; bottom right, broad-scale planting areas just after ploughing, Elder Farm

COMMON AREAS AND FACILITIES

Summary

Management Plan Objective: *'The common parts and shared facilities… are provided by the ELC in order to support smallholders in developing and managing their business. The common parts within the site remain outside of individual holdings and are maintained by the ELC in accordance with the lease.'*

The barn, including its solar and water systems, the track and the trees north of the entrance track remain as communal areas.

As previously reported, the barn has continued to be invaluable but is simply too small for all the needs it is expected to answer. Grant funding was gained this year from Lush Cosmetics to enhance a number of aspects of shared infrastructure. This covered the following: finishing the loop of the track around the three holdings, thus allowing all weather vehicle access to all three plots; and a wind turbine to be built and placed in the north west corner of the site, including funding for all three businesses to attend a turbine building course. This will supplement the existing solar power system once installed.

Improvements to the water supply and filtration system, and the facilities for volunteer visitors were also made based on the funding and support awarded by the A-Team Foundation and linked crowd funding campaign by the smallholders last year.







LAND BASED LIVELIHOOD

Summary

Management Plan Objective: *'The ELC exists to support the creation of land-based livelihoods. Land-based livelihoods at Greenham Reach are to be the growing of crops for personal use and sale, and/or the keeping of livestock and/or bees for personal use and/or for sale.'*

Overall, work across all three plots has progressed significantly this year. Total output, sales, infrastructure, stock numbers and actively farmed area have all increased. Given the standing start from bare green fields only three years ago, the achievements at Greenham Reach have been immense. We now have accounts from the three holdings for the 2015-2016 financial year; two of the three smallholdings have made a modest profit this year, and the only business not to turn a profit was in its first full accounting year as a new business. Overall, this is really encouraging progress for the farms, particularly in light of the significant expenditure required in the early years of a new business. We look forward to seeing further increases in profitability in subsequent years.



Photo: Volunteers help out on Elder Farm, 2016

VOLUNTEERS

A great deal of work has been undertaken by volunteers again this year. Wild Geese Acres said goodbye to their long-term volunteer in the summer of 2016, but a program of local day volunteers has been a good replacement. Steepholding again hosted volunteers this year, with a total of nine weeks of placements, as well as a smaller amount of day volunteers. Elder Farm had a number of temporary volunteer helpers on site between April and November, and have also been setting up an innovative herbal apprenticeship program, one of the first in the country. In total there were about 560 volunteer days donated to the three Greenham Reach plots.

BARRIERS TO GROWTH

We are pleased that a number of barriers identified last year have been resolved this year.

Particular issues that remain are drainage and water retention, electricity production, accommodation for visitors given the limitations on caravans, and having enough hours in the day for a labour-intensive business. A far more supportive fiscal framework, for example being able to claim subsidy payments because of the huge benefits in rural employment and re-skilling, wildlife, carbon emissions, soil management, and so on, would also be helpful!!

ELDER FARM

Elder Farm was the last of the three smallholding families to establish at Greenham Reach, moving to the site in spring 2015. The 2015-16 monitoring period saw considerable expansion of their agricultural activity as they erected two polytunnels, planted 100s of trees, set out a number of perennial crop beds and prepared about an acre of land for broad-scale growing.

Following issues identified last year, Elder Farm and ELC have been working together over the last year to move work forward, and will continue to work with an Action Plan over the coming year. This sets out various steps towards growing and developing their farm business.

In addition to the herbal dispensing business run by Helen Kearney, Elder Farm has been attending a number of markets and events to sell their range of herbal products. On site they have planted tree crops of top fruit, witch hazel and elder, as well as the native woodland area and boundary trees. Long, mulched beds of herbs such as lavender, thyme, mugwort and yarrow are in place. They have continued the process of removing rush by hand from growing areas and have added geese to the existing flock of chickens.

As well as expanding the agricultural activity, a major challenge for the herbal operations is the current lack of drying space and processing room, and this is work that they will be taking forward in 2017. Elder Farm registered with the Soil Association this year, and are due to officially start their organic conversion in February 2017.



Photos: Elder Farm, 2016: top left, seedlings in the polytunnel; top right, elder trees establishing; bottom right, herbal medicines for sale at a local market; bottom left, herbal beds.

WILD GEESE ACRES







Photos: Wild Geese Acres, 2016 (top to bottom) packaging for 'Lucious Leaves' salad bags; James and Sukamala outside the growing area; Shetland sheep on the five-acre field, new stock fencing just visible in background

We are pleased to see that Wild Geese Acres has continued to show steady and consistent growth. After the establishment of the polytunnel at the far end of the growing area early in 2016, the next phase of work – creating the vegetable beds on the far side of the pond – has also been carried out. This means that the area under cultivation (Wild Geese Acreas uses a no-dig method of growing) for the salads and veg has expanded again. This has been reflected in increased sales to a number of local outlets, shops and pubs. A highlight of the year was the production of cantaloupe melons. Demand for Wild Geese Acres produce continues to be high.

The vegetable growing area has been fenced to keep out rabbits, but a far bigger fencing job has been carried out on the main field. Nearly 600m of stock fence has been installed over the summer, and following that a small herd of ten Shetland sheep arrived in the autumn. At the top of the field a paddock for a group of Gloucester Old Spot pigs has also been created, with these due to arrive just outside the period covered by this report. These will go into a 'meat club' that already has generated considerable local interest.

Next steps for Wild Geese Acres centre around further scaling up the business to build on the modest level of profit turned this year. Having found the Action Planning process helpful last year, this holding has elected to work with an Action Plan again for the coming year.

STEEPHOLDING

This year Steepholding has focused on developing particular aspects of their mixed enterprise. A lot of work has gone into the herd of Golden Guernsey goats and the facilities needed for milking animal care. This is in preparation for the start of their planned commercial micro dairy, for which Ruth has been training in cheese making and developing products. The horticulture element of their business has moved from selling at farmer markets, which Steepholding found to be an inefficient use of time, into a CSA (community supported agriculture) box scheme. This had 17 members by the end of the year, offering a good base for steady sales, and with a planned growth up to a maximum of 40 members. Excess veg sold was to local shops and food businesses this year. The market garden area is being cultivated using a no-till system, and was adjusted in terms of layout to a series of 75cm wide beds - a system that has proved highly productive for other small-scale market gardeners.

A small herd of sheep has been added, for grazing of the water meadows, and the chickens continued to supply eggs for both sale and home consumption.

Steepholding continues to produce a huge variety of goods, with vegetables, top and bush fruit and fruit trees all for sale. The orchard has continued to grow well in general, but the peach trees fell victim to canker and it was not a great year for fruit crops, while the strawberry beds were moved in an effort to reduce squirrel damage. Christmas sales of young fruit trees sold pre-innoculated with mychorrizzal fungi were a success.

With the set-up costs of the goat facilities and fencing, the micro dairy is not yet fully in operation; more work will be needed on processing facilities over the coming year, with the installation of the extended track helping through improved access. As for the other holdings, the coming year will be about consolidating the excellent work already undertaken to increase sales and profitability, building on the modest profit turned this year.







Photos: Steepholding, 2016 (top to bottom) Ruth O'Brien represents Steepholding at a farmers' market; crops growiing in the market garden; Golden Guernsey kids

DWELLINGS TIED TO SMALLHOLDINGS

Summary

Management Plan Objective: *'The three temporary dwellings at Greenham Reach are to stay tied to their land holding.'*

The dwellings are all still tied to their holding, in accordance with the site planning permission. The leaseholders are resident in the dwellings and there is no subletting, nor any sale of the land.

DISCOUNTED, AFFORDABLE LEASE PRICE (INCLUDING RESALE)

Summary

Management Plan Objective: *'It is central to the ELC's approach that the initial purchase of the lease, and its resale, will be at an affordable price.'*

As last year, we are not yet in a position to comment on the affordability of the leases relative to smallholder income, as the businesses are still in an early stage of development. We look forward to reporting on this aspect more fully in subsequent annual audits.

In the period 19th November 2015 to 18th November 2016, none of the original smallholders sold their smallholding.

We are satisfied that the site management complies with the Management Plan in this area.

MONITORING, ACTION PLANS, AND DEALING WITH BREACHES

Elder Farm will continue to work with an ELC Action Plan over the coming year. There have been no additional breaches this year and overall we remain very happy with progress at Greenham Reach.

This report fulfils our annual monitoring responsibilities as outlined in the Management Plan.

ONGOING COSTS FOR THE ELC

Detailed below are the costs to the Ecological Land Co-operative associated with Greenham Reach in the 2016 financial year (our financial year runs from 1st January – 31st December). Although this financial reporting is not a part of the Management Plan requirements, it does form an important part of the context in which the site continues to develop. Please note, this is not a set of accounts or finances for the individual smallholding businesses at Greenham Reach, those are confidential to the holdings themselves and the ELC.

We received significant grant income this year to help establish infrastructure for the businesses at Greenham Reach – many thanks to Lush Cosmetics and the A-Team Foundation. Although almost all of the work related to the grants has been carried out, not all invoices have yet been settled, so we are carrying forward a surplus for the year.

Staff costs in relation to monitoring against the Management Plan have remained very significant, and this year we have been paying wages for an additional site liaison role to help deal with the wide range of issues affecting new start up holdings such as ours. The high costs involved in fulfilling the very extensive commitments made to the planning authority as part of our temporary planning permission has certainly been a salutary lesson for us, and one that we will take forward into costing future developments.

ELC P&L for Greenham Reach, 2016	
Income	
Feed in Tariff	£514
Grant income (Greenham Reach specific)	£29,931
Management fees (insurance contribution)	£150
Monitoring fees	£1,211
Total Income	**£31,806**
Expenses	
Greenham Reach property costs	
Infrastructure	£6,850
Legal and professional fees	£350
Staff costs (site management)	£625
Site monitoring	
Other	£4
Staff costs	£4,500
Surveys & tests	£515
Travel & subsistence	£505
Other	
Staff cost (site liaison)	£1,728
Insurance	£680
Total Expense	**£15,752**
Surplus/Loss	**£16,054**







ECOLOGICAL LAND CO-OPERATIVE

Get in touch

Info@ecologicalland.coop

www.ecologicalland.coop

Unit B04

The Brighton Eco-Centre

Brighton

BN1 3PB

facebook.com/ecolandcoop

@ecolandcoop

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