

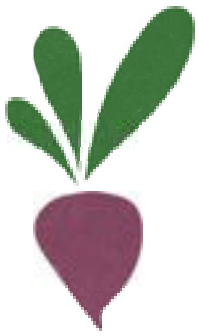
Ecological Land Cooperative

For a living, working countryside

Social Impact Report

June 2022 – June 2023

The Ecological Land Cooperative's Social Impact Report for the period from June 2022 to June 2023



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ELC's Mission

The objects of the society, as described in our rules for the cooperative's management, are to benefit the community by widening access to land for sustainable land-based uses including but not limited to:

- local food, grown with minimal inputs;
- renewable energy, and fossil fuel Independence;
- reconnecting people and place though social and cultural activities;
- forestry, fibres and other rural produce;
- homemaking and community.

And the general cooperative aims described below:

- To build membership within its stakeholder groups, and ensure that its membership fully reflects the diversity of those groups and of the wider community.
- To consult with, encourage participation from and respond to its membership.
- To create a common wealth, building an indivisible reserve and providing a return on investment no more than is necessary to attract and retain the capital it requires.
- To maintain its autonomy and independence and empower members and other stakeholders at the most local level possible.
- To educate its members and employees, support education in the wider community and promote co-operation.
- To support the development and growth of the cooperative movement.
- To evaluate its impact on the community and the environment in which it operates, and develop policies that reduce harmful impacts and increase positive impacts.

How we measure our impact

We consider our impact under three broad headings:

Food sovereignty and democracy

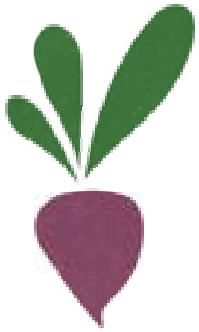
1. Widening access to land for affordable, sustainable use.
2. Producing food, forestry, fibres and other rural produce with minimal inputs.
3. Working with producers to rebuild local supply chains.

Social impact and community resilience

1. Supporting the development of resilient communities (inc. reconnecting people and place though social and cultural activities).
2. Supporting the sharing of knowledge and training (inc. ecological literacy/nature connection).
3. Building links with and between ecological/educational/agricultural organisations, communities, and projects.
4. Providing employment.
5. Building membership and member participation.

Ecological impact

1. Working towards renewable energy and fossil fuel independence.
2. Maintaining and enhancing habitats, species diversity, landscape quality.



Words from the ELC's Chair

We hear from Lynne Davis, chair of the ELC's board of directors, for a summary of the successes and challenges faced by the cooperative over the last 12 months.



This Social Impact report covers the period from June 2022 to June 2023 but arrives 18 months after the last one, now that we have our AGM in November. It feels fitting to report on our social impact at this time of year. Our steward community has a little more time to breathe. We are all ready to slow down a little, reflect on the fruits of our work and embed our new growth into our roots.

So much happened over these 12 months. We have seen our steward community grow. We welcome our new stewards Emma Bell, Pablo Lalor, Camilla Mays and Sivalingam Vasanthakumar into the community.

After years of slow planning progress due to COVID-9 and the knock on implications across planning systems, we've now received successful planning decisions across 5 sites.

Our Gift Your Land campaign has launched successfully and we've been pleasantly surprised at the interest we received. After our successful crowdfunder (thank you!) renovations are underway on our first gifted farm, Maesgwyn Isaf in Carmarthenshire.

We've progressed against all of our social and ecological aims under continued challenging conditions, navigating spiralling costs of developments, cost of living increases and unstable weather patterns that impact everyone in our community.

The biggest changes over this time have been internal to the organisation. We said goodbye to our wonderful coordinator Sonia Sinanan, who played a defining role in bringing the ELC to its current form. We have welcomed two stewards onto the board - Ruth O'Brien and John Whittick - who are bringing incredible wisdom in guiding the organisation. We've focused on finding ways the ELC can better support the steward community, who are now having regular steward gatherings and it is heartening to see the steward community growing into one of mutual support and care.

This summer we also said goodbye to one of our inspiring founders, Zoe Wangler, who has departed the ELC board after helping to build this organisation from the ground up. Additionally we welcomed our new coordinator, Zoe Truong, who has stepped into this role bringing a wealth of organisational experience. We're lucky to have her grounding presence in the team.

While it's great to celebrate our successes it's also important to recognise where we need to improve. The last 12 months have taken a toll with extensive investment in business planning and a number of changes across the staff, steward and board groups.

As we continue to mature as an organisation it is important that we continue to embed ways of working together that centre care, connection and support. I feel grateful to everyone in the community - staff, stewards, investors and board - that model this so beautifully every time we meet.

ELC Sites Map

We have 6 sites in England and Wales at various stages of development. Each site has 3 farms making a total of 15 small farms. We have recently been given Maesgwyn Isaf, a 66 acre farm in West Wales.

Greenham Reach, Mid Devon 3 farms
Steepholding, Wild Geese Acres and Crystal

Martinsfield, Arlington, East Sussex 3 farms
Allwood Farm, Aweside Farm and one available plot

Furzehill Green, Gower, Swansea 3 farms
Cae Tan CSA, The Rowan Tree and one OPD in the pipeline

Wyvern Fields, Sparkford, South Somerset 3 farms
Cider Apple Trees, Woodland Farm, and Off-Grid Organics

Orchard Park, Upton Cross, Cornwall 3 farms
Three available plots

Maesgwyn Isaf, Llanboidy, Carmarthenshire
Newly donated farm house and 66 acres of land



Site Progress

Each year we measure our progress by looking at the development milestones that our sites have reached. The table below shows the number of acres of our land that have reached each progress stage.

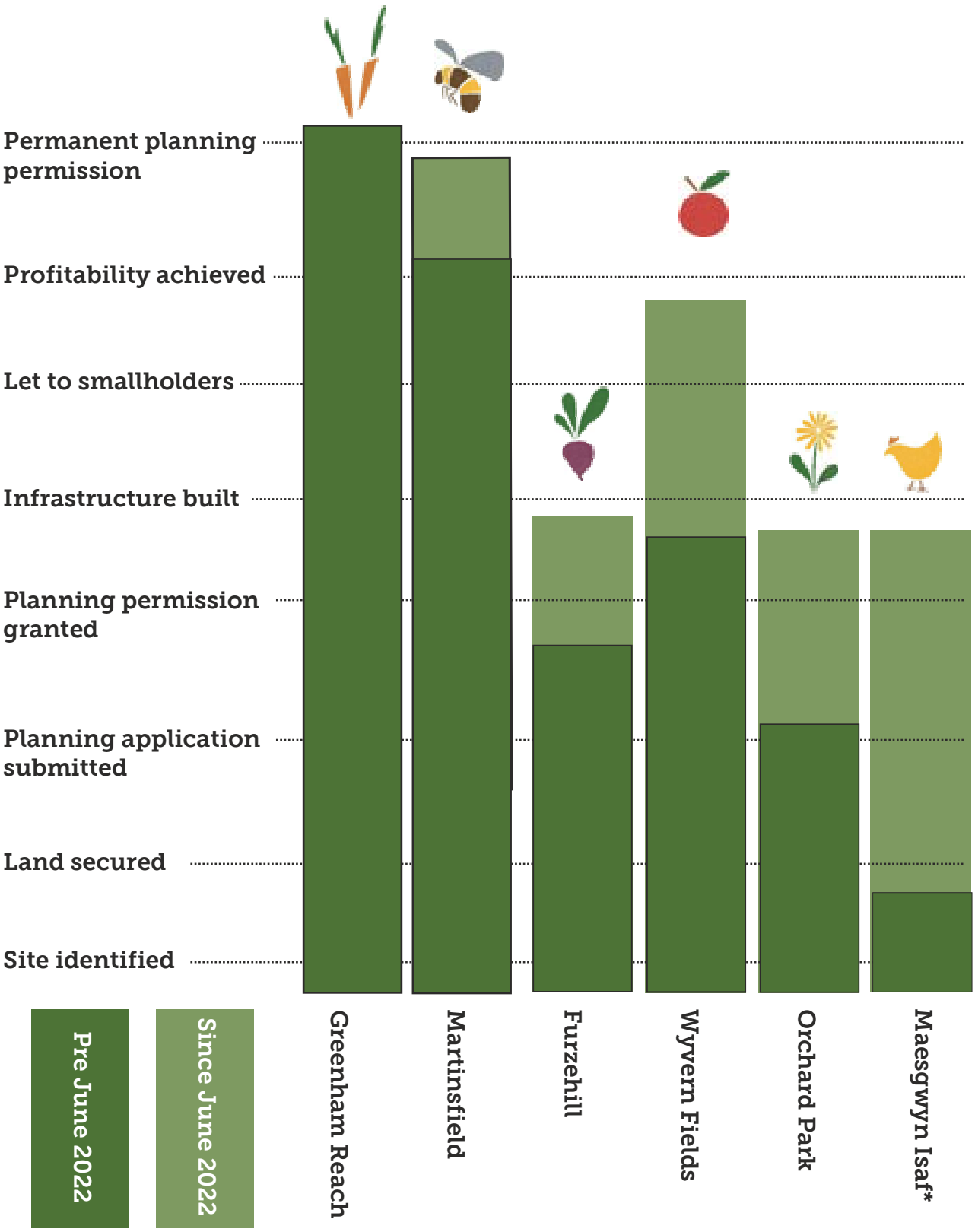
Measuring Site Progress in 2022-23 (using acreage as points)

Our sites are Greenham Reach (21 acres), Martinsfield (18.5 acres), Furzehill (18 acres), Sparkford (21 acres), Orchard Park (20.4 acres), Maesgwyn Isaf (66 acres).

	At 1st June 2021	At 1st June 2022	At 1st June 2023
Acres secured	98.9	145.9	164.9
Consultation complete	98.9	145.9	164.9
Pre planning Application submitted	98.9	98.9	98.9
Planning application validated	78.5	98.9	98.9
Planning application decision	39.5	60.5	86.9
Planning conditions / appeal completed	39.5	39.5	60.5
Let to small holders	48	48	69
First accounts / wildlife survey	78.5	78.5	78.5
Profitability achieved	39.5	39.5	42
Permanent planning permission	21	68	87
Total 'points'	641.2	823.6	951.5
Progress for the year (in points)	89.3	182.4	127.9

Site Progress

The graph below gives a snapshot of progress on each of our sites.



*As there is already a house at Maesgwyn Isaf, there is not a requirement to obtain planning permission ahead of getting stewards on site. The site is undergoing renovations currently.

One ELC Steward's Journey

In this interview with Camilla Mays, one of the Ecological Land Cooperative's newest stewards, who farms 4.5 acres at our Wyvern Fields site in South Somerset. Cam's business, Off-grid Organics, is an organic, no-dig market garden growing a variety of vibrant, nutrient dense vegetables and salad crops for the local community.

How did you hear about the Ecological Land Cooperative?

The Ecological Land Cooperative has been on my radar a long time before I applied. I actually came and stuck my head over the gate at Wyvern Fields soon after the ELC had bought it but didn't make an application until after some applicants pulled out.

Through my own investigation I came across the One Planet Development scheme in Wales. I have wanted to do something similar to this for a long while so I did a lot of research into similar projects elsewhere. Later on I was working with Allwood Farm at the ELC's Martinsfield site through my role with Sussex Peasant, so I found out more about the coop through that side as well.

Initially I had a conversation with Oliver Bettany, I was given more details but never got as far as making the application. I didn't go for it because the timing just wasn't right and I guess on an underlying level I needed to upskill and learn a little more. COVID was quite a big thing, my work locally was drying up, my grandmother was getting increasingly sick and I wanted to help my mum care for her. It felt completely different when I saw it come up again, I felt very certain that now, this was my time.

What was it about our work that made you interested in applying for a plot?

It really felt to me that the ELC is trying to maintain an authenticity. The monitoring, the application, the business plan, the assessments, it all made it feel that it's existence is really authentic. Some people would be put off having to go through all of that but for me that was really attractive. The fact that there is a community there, an inbuilt support network. There's advice from ELC staff in the office but here on the ground it's great to know you're not here totally alone. The model itself brings with it a support network which is totally great. And also it just made it a reality for me in terms of finances.

What were your expectations when you applied? Have we met them?

I guess so- I didn't really have too many expectations. Everything the ELC said they would do they have done. They said they would sell me some land and put a barn on it and that happened!

What has it been like for you to be in the application process?

For me it was quite rapid in comparison to others. It was efficient, it felt fairly well supported. It was perhaps something new that wasn't done before, having deadlines on things. I really appreciated that element. Before there was a timescale on things it felt a bit confusing and weirdly unnecessarily competitive- were you





wasting your time putting effort in? I didn't know if others were weeks ahead on their journey. Then when there was a timeline, everyone had the same opportunity, like a job advert. I really liked that structure.

Have you felt supported by the ELC during the application process?

Yes I have. The whole process was pretty efficient, pretty clear, I knew as soon as those deadlines were in place, I knew what you wanted from me, I knew what was expected of me and I wouldn't change any of that.

I think I could have had a better understanding about who I could contact during the process on Hannah's non-working day, in order to clarify something small. Having to wait a few days for it felt a bit panicky when you're up against a deadline. It felt like if I had something to ask on a Thursday and had to wait until Tuesday I was wasting 5 days that was huge.

Do you have any comments or suggestions for how we might do things differently?

What would have been very beneficial going forward is knowing about a few hidden costs that we weren't aware of. It was clear that ELC would be providing the barn and the solar array. It wasn't clear that that didn't include the connection which I didn't hear about until the day before - 'Jules is coming tomorrow and its £150 per property' And there were other costs that weren't mentioned until signing the contracts. For example, we would need to register with the land registry which would include solicitors fees. Also the stewards needed to pay stamp duty- we didn't know about that and were fined. There's around £1000 there that I could have borrowed beforehand, and wouldn't have been left really tight financially going into the business.

What are your hopes for the future?

Gosh, I've been really really pleased with how things have gone so far, I haven't grown a lot this year but everything I have grown I've sold, I've got a good base of customers already. Hopes for the future is to expand the business, to grow. To be in a position in about four years from now to meet all the criteria to obtain permanent planning permission.

I'm loving it, it has really been great. The whole process has felt quite smooth and quite simple for such a big thing. Sometimes I'm like 'really that was it?'. I don't understand why there aren't hundreds of people applying to do it! I'm going to use my 40th birthday in a couple of weeks to bring all my friends and family to site to do lots of work and then have a big party!



Photo credits: Camilla Mays

Stewards Gathering 2023

During the winter season 2023 a large number of ELC stewards came together for the inaugural Steward Gathering at Sheepdrove Organic Farm in Berkshire.

The purpose of the gathering was to support stronger working relationships and community connections between our steward group and across each site.

The day began with an exercise to visualise the farms that the stewards had just travelled from and more specifically a place where they are happiest. This was shared with the group and gave us all a little glimpse into each other's worlds. Taking the exercise further we explored where the points of contact with each other are across the sites, reflecting on the potential of these spaces.

The rest of the day was spent looking more closely at methods for good communication and decision making, in particular exploring the use of consensus decision making among other approaches.

The day culminated with a chance to apply what was learnt on a live issue which affects the steward group directly and of course we ran out of time because there was so much to discuss!

Luckily everyone stayed over in the beautiful on-site accommodation at Sheepdrove and the stewards enjoyed spending some quality social time together over dinner. Reflecting on the outcomes of the gathering, there has been a much stronger connection between stewards who now support each other with suggestions for funding, technical support and more. Embedding decision making practices into the daily lives on site has come less naturally but some have embraced the new approach while others await new stewards to their site to practice with.



Photo credit: ELC

Gift Your Land- campaign successes

Last year we launched a campaign asking for gifts of land for ecological farms. We invited landowners to help support a new generation of farmers working for nature and for climate – now, and into the future.

We are pleased to report that the Gift Your Land campaign has been highly successful with a variety of potential offers received over the last 12 months. Thanks to the incredible generosity shown to us we now have one donated farm under our ownership and another in the final stages of negotiations.

Maesgwyn Isaf

Our first gifted holding, Maesgwyn Isaf, is a 66-acre farm in Carmarthenshire in South Wales.

The farm consists of pasture, areas of woodland and streams, a wind turbine, a farmhouse, and agricultural buildings including two large barns.

The farm was gifted to us by Jenn and Stuart Carter, who owned the farm since 2002. Passionate about the environment, the Carters planted over 13,000 trees at Maesgwyn Isaf, creating an extensive native woodland, and also installed a 6kW wind turbine. They created a stone and ogham tree circle next to the Landsker Trail footpath and planted a Peace Wood where many friends and family members' ashes are scattered.



Photo credit: Kris Fowler



Originally, Maesgwyn Isaf was to be donated to the ELC as a living legacy, with the owners exchanging their title on the land for a long leasehold on a small eco-house. However, this did not come to fruition and the ELC did not hear from the Carters for many years.

In 2018 we were informed that the ELC had been named as the beneficiary of Maesgwyn Isaf farm, and sadly the news came just two years later that both owners had passed away. It took over two years to finalise the handover of the farm which was completed in July 2022.

During this time much of the farm became overgrown and the house became uninhabitable through weather damage. Certain fields were grazed by a local farmer, who topped the other fields in exchange. The wind turbine ceased functioning and needed major repairs to begin generating electricity again.

New Life for the Farm

Although there was a lot of work to be done to bring the farm back into use, this was work that could be started immediately. We were able to make part of the house habitable and bring caretakers



Kris and Ellis, onto the farm who have done an amazing job managing the land, fixing the wind turbine and starting work on repairing the house.

We have kept the cost of this down by offering rent free accommodation in exchange for a certain amount of work on the farm. The ELC has also benefited from having people on site who are getting to know the farm well and integrating into the local community.

Crowdfunding

In autumn 2022 we reached out to our networks through a crowdfunder and raised £31,835 to bring the farm back to life. This enabled us to start the repairs needed and bring the land back under management. We would like to extend a huge thank you to everyone who supported us through the crowdfunder- we are truly grateful.

Plans for the Future

As we have no debt outstanding on the farm, we can consider offering long-term secure rental tenancies at Maesgwyn Isaf. This model will increase affordability to potential farm stewards, as individuals would not have to produce the lump sum needed to secure our traditional multi-generation leaseholds.

Money generated through rents will be directly invested in the farm to continue the regeneration process. As we do not need to seek planning permission at Maesgwyn Isaf we can consider alternatives to commercial farm businesses such as subsistence farming, local craft businesses and land-based activities that only require small plots of land.

As of autumn 2023 we have opened an expression of interest process for applicants interested in taking on land or buildings for ecological farming and landwork, who could work and live at the farm.

We are ever thankful for the generosity of spirit and care for the land that led the Carters to gift their farm to the ELC and bring it into community ownership. We will work hard to ensure that it is a site that will provide a home and a livelihood for many new entrants to farming and landwork, as well as a resource for the local community long into the future.

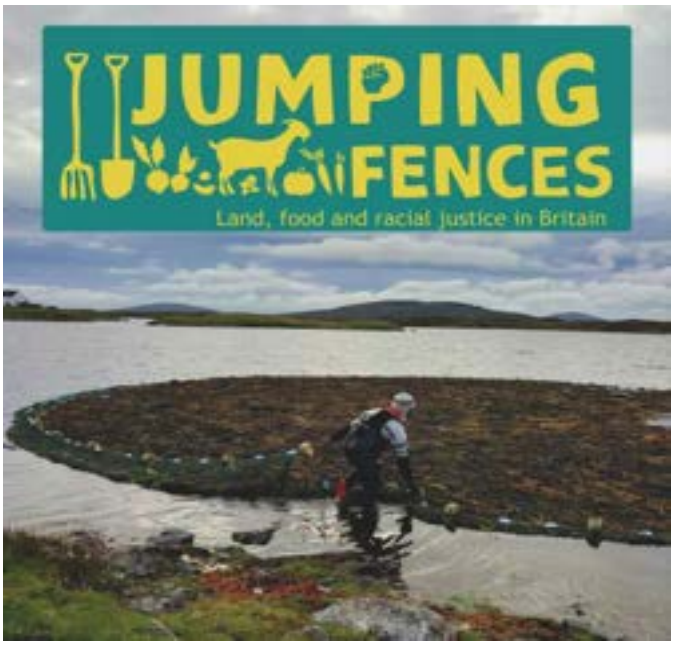




Photo credits: ELC & Sarah Whittick

Jumping Fences

During 2022 we collaborated with Land in Our Names and the Land Workers' Alliance to identify barriers to accessing land and rural spaces for Black people and people of colour in the UK. Here are some findings:



Launched at ORFC 2023 by lead researcher Naomi Terry, the Jumping Fences project provides evidence-based findings on the barriers and challenges faced by BPOC landworkers in Britain, and how they seek to overcome them.

The report contains an analysis of semi-structured interviews with sixteen people who are currently working in the agricultural sector and land-based work in Britain.

It presents the following key findings:

- All participants experienced isolation in the sector, sometimes in quite traumatic ways.
- There were many experiences of systemic or structural racialisation, for example being perceived as less competent, or being tokenised.
- Issues arose for participants based on pervasive societal narratives around who farming is for and what it looks like.
- Experiences related to race are compounded by other dimensions of identity and oppression.
- Participants felt motivated towards bringing diversity and justice into the farming sector.

"*Whilst carrying out this research, I came across a real range of experiences of British farming cultures*" says lead researcher Naomi Terry

"S*ome people are experiencing overt racism, for example on work exchange farms, or at agricultural university. Many others experience microaggressions*"

The Jumping Fences report makes key recommendations to address the barriers faced by BPOC landworkers:

- Shift narratives surrounding who farming is for and associated stigma
- Change workplace culture on farms and in farming organisations
- Develop strategies of support, both for emerging and for established BPOC farmers
- Promote greater and more stable access to land

"*There is clearly a need for more financial support, access to land and new entrant opportunities for people from racialised backgrounds in farming, but this alone will not address deeply entrenched structural inequalities*" says Naomi

To read the full report please visit landinournames.community/projects/jumping-fences

Site Monitoring Reports for 2021

Greenham Reach

This is the now the ninth report on our first farm site at Greenham Reach, in Mid Devon, which is home to three small farm enterprises.



Back in 2019, we were told that the four fields at Greenham Reach wouldn't grow any food, - but we now have three farms providing all sorts of produce and hosting a huge increase in wildlife and biodiversity.

The three smallholdings at Greenham Reach- Steepholding, which began in 2013, Wild Geese Acres begun in 2014, and Crystal, which is just beginning this year in 2023.

Across the farms there is primarily ecological horticultural activity with fruit, vegetables and salads; an apple tree nursery; livestock in the form of goats, kune kune pigs and poultry; a flower business; and a variety of productive and woodland trees.

Smallholdings at Greenham Reach

Following the departure of what used to be Elder Farm , Emma and Pablo have moved to Greenham Reach and set up their farm- 'Crystal'. They signed a short term lease in February 2023.

The Crystal business plan is called 'Seed to Sandwich ' and is based around production for a market catering stall. In their own words: "Seed to Sandwich is a farm to sandwich food business, selling anything but your average sandwich at our street food stall."

They have begun by putting in the foundations for their business; observation of the site, basic land preparation and building a low impact wooden cabin to live in while they wait for the permissions and finance for a longer term dwelling. They've also been getting to know the rest of the people at Greenham Reach.

Ecology at Greenham Reach

Across the site, the trees are busy putting down roots and soaking up carbon, and the hedges are being managed and flourishing. A variety of animals like snakes and hedgehogs are now present again , as various ecological niches develop.

We had an ecological assessment of the grassland and the wider site from an ecologist in summer 2022. The report was favourable and encouraging and said that the hedgerows were found to " be in



Wild Geese Acres -photo credit: Sarah Whittick

excellent condition" in 2014, 2017 and 2022.

"*The thick nature and irregular management mean that these hedgerows offer excellent sheltering and foraging habitat for a number of invertebrates, birds and mammals. The planted hedgerows are also growing well and are starting to provide good additional habitat for a range of faunal species*." P5. (Gibbons 2022, available on request from ELC)

The rarer grassland on the steep bank was stable, but with various fluctuations over the 7 years from 2014. Due to a slight decline in positive indicator species last year we should keep this area under review.

Going forward

With all three farms occupied again, there is new energy around, and opportunities for working together on the communal areas.

And with one permanent permission for a permanent home now received from Mid Devon Council in July 2023, and a second one looking hopeful/ imminent, this is a great step forward in terms of long term security , and a vote of confidence in our model.

Permanent homes will mean happier farmers, which means better management of the land, and it means that the businesses and wildlife will be more secure too.







Photo credits: Wild Geese Acres

Martinsfield, Arlington

There are currently two smallholding farms on site at Martinsfield, with stewards being sought for the third plot. Application for permanent permission is underway for the two established businesses.



This is our third report on Martinsfield. We achieved temporary planning permission from Wealden Council in the summer of 2018. At the end of 2019 two couples moved onto two of the holdings, and began setting up their homes and business. They were joined at the start of 2021 by Ben and Bryony Allwood with their wholesale veg business, Allwood Farm.

Landscape

The land at Martinsfield continues to change and develop, as the trees grow and the buildings and growing areas become embedded in the landscape. As our last report pointed out, the heavy soil and weather conditions are a challenge at Arlington, perhaps the most challenging of all our sites.

Changes at Martinsfield

In the autumn of 2022 Chris and Emily from Fanfield Farm, left Martinsfield . The difficulties of bringing up their new baby in temporary accommodation, whilst setting up a farm business, plus the strains of the COVID pandemic and harsh weather conditions , led to them wanting a new start.

ELC valued their improvements to the land and bought back their lease in June 2023. That process took about 9 months, which was a lesson in how long these kinds of things take to organize. We began to maintain the land on the farm again and began looking for new people to take over.

Ecological Assessment

Summer of 2022 saw the second of our major ecological assessments at Martinsfield, following the first baseline survey in 2020, carried out by Dan from the Ecology Co-Op. We are pleased by its findings. In summary, to quote from the report :

"*Overall, this first comparison of data with the baseline is encouraging despite being based on a limited number of site visits. The results indicate that particularly for pollinating insect and earthworm assemblages, species richness and abundance have increased markedly on the smallholdings, and the new habitats that have been created are having a positive effect on biodiversity.*"

For just one particular example of enhanced species variety : identified dragonfly species have increased from one to eight in those two years!



Photo credits: ELC / Allwood Farm

The future at Martinsfield

The two remaining businesses, Allwood Farm and Aweside Farm have continued to increase their productive area and their business sales, supplying wholesale vegetable crops, salads, herbs and edible flowers.

For those two farms, we are currently undertaking an application for permanent permission , as the temporary five year period is up in the autumn of 2023.

For the Fanfield Farm area, we are left in a difficult position with our planning permission, given that the stewards have left, and we have now applied for a new temporary permission , while we seek to get new farmers established there.

Orchard Park, Upton Cross, Cornwall

Bought in 2018, Orchard Park is 20 acre field located on the eastern edge of Bodmin moor. Farm stewards are currently being sought for this site.

After a relatively short process temporary planning permission was granted by Cornwall council in November 2022 for three low-impact smallholdings at the site.

We are currently seeking farm stewards for the site, but are finding it more challenging to secure suitable applicants than our other sites.

In the meantime, Orchard Park is under the excellent stewardship of Verity Groom, our local site manager, who is visiting the site regularly and showing prospective stewards around.

We are hopeful to continue infrastructure work on the site in 2024, including constructing an access track, communal timber frame barn and off-grid utilities including solar PV and rainwater harvesting systems

We trust in the meantime the fields at Orchard Park are proving a valuable haven for wildlife.





Photo credits: Verity Groom/ ELC

Furzehill Green, Gower

Furzehill is home to the Rowan Tree, who have recently had OPD approval to live and work on the site. The second plot is being taken on by stewards in the very near future. Land is also rented by neighbouring Cae Tan CSA.



The winter and spring 2023 brought more challenging weather conditions to Gower , with storms, gales and droughts. But production and development of the farms continued in the face of it all.

The Rowan Tree

The Rowan Tree has been growing their market base and expanding production into vegetables alongside their cut flower business. They have constructed new sheds alongside the polytunnel and are growing more varieties than ever before. Their Instagram account is full of amazing pictures of their flower bouquets.

After much back and forth with Swansea Council we were told in May 2023 that we would finally be getting One Planet Development permission for their farm - the first on Gower. We are confident that official confirmation of this is on its way, although we are still awaiting the final letter. Trevor and Bettina are making plans to move onto their farm and at last see the back of their daily commute.

Cae Tan CSA

Cae Tan CSA has been continuing their market garden and keeping their customers satisfied! Their land has now seen the addition of 50 fruit trees and additional coppice trees. Francesca who grows salad on their land has also shifted her model to a CSA business.

Cae Tan continue to be very active in the local community- helping set up other local food businesses around Swansea, hosting school trips and training up numerous volunteers.

Infrastructure

The barn and track that were agreed by the Council last year have not been built yet, due to a combination of planning and finance complications. We hope they are now very imminent.

Ecological Assessment

Ecologically, the whole site is developing well. In early 2023 we had a survey carried out by local ecologist Owain Gabb. His review was heartening.

In particular its great to see the hedges fill out and become much stronger, as they were in a very poor and damaged state



Photo credit: The Rowan Tree

when we took over the land. Equally, the range of bird life spotted, especially in the currently vacant northern fields, is a sign of wildlife being able to recover well, given a chance. We've also created another new nesting site for swallows, to go with the ones at Greenham and Martinsfield.

From the survey letter:

"It is considered that the changes at the site since 2020 deliver against all aspects of the Welsh Government's definition of ecosystem resilience. The site has developed greater structural diversity with less intensive management, the extent and condition of semi-natural features has increased / improved, the hedge network provides better connection across the site in the context of the local landscape, while the nature of use will allow soil recovery."

And:

"One of the more notable changes noted during the visit in 2023 was the relative abundance in bird usage of the site. Flocks of linnet and meadow pipit, and small numbers of reed bunting were recorded around the horticultural plots, barn swallows were breeding in an on-site building, and the general levels of activity by common species such as robin, wren, dunnock and tit species was considerable. The majority of these species are in population decline, and most are species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in Wales."









Photo credits: The Rowan Tree

Wyvern Fields, Sparkford, South Somerset

With the long awaited approval of temporary planning permission in May 2022, we got the go ahead for people to live at Wyvern Fields. The site is now home to three thriving residential land-based businesses



Stewards at Wyvern Fields

John and Sarah Whittick had already established the infrastructure and basis for their Cider Apple Tree nursery and have now moved on with their accommodation. This was followed by Kumar with his plan for a 'farm to fork' business, growing the produce for a South Indian Dosa Bar stall at regional markets; and by Camilla Mays with her market garden business 'Off-Grid Organics'- aiming to supply a mobile farm shop in Somerset.

So by Spring 2023 we had three farmers resident at Wyvern Fields. Four and a half years from the purchase of the land, and via numerous planning delays, there was active, residential, land work.

Over the summer of 2023 the frame of the communal barn was built by a local timber building company. This meant that the building could also host solar panels and so provide electricity to the residents. John Whittick put the timber cladding on the barn, and trenched in a lot of power cable - and it is all looking very splendid.



Even better, with the three businesses now active, much of the field is getting cultivated and production is starting to take off. The apple tree nursery has been doing well, the new hedge and standard fruit trees are growing strongly and our stewards are making communal plans for the ELC retained land. Crops are in the ground at Kumar's and Cam's farm ready for the 2024 harvest. The sheep and hens at Cider Apple Trees are looking healthy.

Ecological Assessment

As with our other sites, the huge range of activities now happening across the field, with all the variety of habitats that creates, is now leading to increasing levels of wildlife .

Our 2023 ecological survey said the whole site had "*improved considerably*" particularly noting the hedgerows and greater diversity in the grassland. Our stewards report that owls have spotted the large numbers of voles in residence and are taking good advantage!



Photo credits: Cider Apple Trees

Worker's Survey

The period from June 2022 to June 2023 saw a number of changes to the worker team at the ELC.

We said goodbye to our Information Systems Manager, as this role came to an end. The majority of these tasks absorbed into other roles across the cooperative or are externally supported.

In April we recruited a new Fundraising Manager, and we were pleased to appoint someone with specific expertise in Individual Giving Schemes in line with the proposed development of our fundraising targets. Finally, we began preparations for the departure of our longstanding Coordinator who has been a pivotal member within the cooperative since 2016.

As of June 2023, the ELC worker team has 12 members, all working part-time and remotely to support the organisation.

We are pleased to see improvements in many areas of the satisfaction survey. However, we also note the fall in confidence around conflict resolution and strategic support and these are areas that we will prioritise in the coming year. Please see table below- scores are out of a possible 5.

Survey questions and comments	June '22	June '23
Everyone at the co-op is working toward the same organisational goals.	4.3	4.4
I see a clear link between my work and the ELC's goals.	4.6	4.7
The ELC board is sincerely interested in the needs and welfare of the employees.	4.1	3.5
When conflicts arise at the co-op, they are effectively resolved.	3.4	3.2
Employees are treated fairly and equally at the ELC	4	4.5
I receive good levels of support in my work from my co-workers.	4.3	4.5
I am fairly paid for the work I do relative to other local opportunities.	3.8	4
Employee ideas often result in changes at the ELC.	3.8	4.2
ELC workers' overall satisfaction score.	4	4.1

Many thanks to all of the people and organisations who have supported our work over the last year.

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