Ecological Land Cooperative

For a living, working countryside

Social Impact Report July 2023 – June 2024



The Ecological Land Cooperative's Social Impact Report
July 2023 to June 2024

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Our Mission

Our mission, as described in the rules for our cooperative's management, is to "*benefit the community by widening access to land for sustainable land based uses*"

These land based uses include:

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

Our cooperative aims

- To build membership within stakeholder groups, and ensure that our 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 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 (including reconnecting people and place though social and cultural activities).
2. Supporting the sharing of knowledge and training (including 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.

Our strategic path for the next decade

Our vision is of a living, working countryside where land is valued in a way that enhances the local community and the natural world.

In 2024, the Ecological Land Cooperative (ELC) will launch its new Strategic Plan setting a bold and purposeful direction for the next decade.

This new business plan reflects months of research and consultation to chart our path forward. this plan is a true community effort., shaped by invaluable insights from ELC staff, farm stewards, investors, supporters, and board members, with support from consultant Andy Cocktaildress.

These strategic goals were endorsed by members at last year's AGM, and we are energised by the prospect of transforming these plans into action.

Over the last 15 years, the ELC has become a beacon in the agroecology sector, offering guidance and support for aspiring stewards passionate about accessing land for ecological farming and land work.

Through successful planning applications and our advocacy for systemic change, we're shifting perspectives on low-impact development and creating a pathway for others to follow.

It is our commitment to the ELC's vision that drives us to create a future where land is valued not only for its productivity but also for its power to build resilient communities and restore natural systems.

ELC members 2023-24 (L-R): John Whittick, Lynne Davis, Ruth O'Brien, Luci Edwards, Emma Bell, Dylan Lindo-Jones, Oli Rodker. Holger Westphely not pictured.

Our vision for the next ten years includes:

- Accepting donated farms and land, alongside land purchases.
- Diversifying the range and types of plots available for stewardship, including housing options.
- Adapting and diversifying our fundraising strategy.

Our fourth priority is fundamental to the ELC'S continued growth and success:

- Investing in people and processes to strengthen our steward and staff communities.

As we embark on this next chapter, our strategic direction serves as both a roadmap and a rallying call to all who believe in a living countryside that supports people and nature in equal measure.

This decade will bring the cooperative both new challenges and remarkable opportunities, and we look forward to working together to make a lasting impact on our communities, our land, and our collective future.



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.



It has been a year of learning and exploration for the Ecological Land Cooperative. Last year the cooperative developed a new strategic direction, and we have spent the last twelve months creating the organisational infrastructure to enable us to move in that direction.

Transitioning our legal structure

The most significant change we're implementing is to our legal structure. This transition involves merging the ELC with the Ecological Land Trust - the charitable body that exists alongside the ELC- to form a Charitable Community Benefit Society. This will mean the ELC is better positioned to accept land donations and generate charitable income.

Consolidating the two entities will create a simpler and more transparent legal and operational framework. A substantial effort, with support from Co-ops UK, has gone into ensuring that we maintain our existing governance structure within the new legal model. This will ensure continuity as we move forward. This proposed transition is the primary resolution up for voting at this years AGM.

Widening our offer to farm stewards

A key focus of our new model is to improve the opportunities available to ELC stewards. With the addition of our two donated farms, Maesgwyn Isaf and Ragmans Lane, we have been developing new rental models that create more pathways into agroecological farming.

Thanks to funding from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, we're able to explore improving accommodation options for stewards. This funding is also supporting our broader efforts to address the systemic barriers in the UK planning system.

Planning setbacks

Our second site, Martinsfield, faced a significant setback when we failed to secure permanent planning permission at the initial hearing. This happened despite the fact that the Martinsfield stewards met all requirements and demonstrated remarkable dedication under extremely challenging conditions. The ELC is appealing the council's decision, and while we remain optimistic about a successful outcome, it is by no means assured. This situation has placed an unacceptable strain on the stewards, who have poured everything into building their farms and livelihoods.

Centring steward voices

While we continue to navigate the next steps for Martinsfield the cooperative is taking steps to prevent such stressful scenarios in the future, including

refining our operational model and prioritising our stewards in all aspects of our planning and decision-making. These changes aim to ensure better support and security for current and future stewards.

The effort to centre steward voices within the cooperative is being guided through a concerted effort between stewards and staff. Regular steward gatherings and meetings, is complemented by a WhatsApp group that fosters much needed knowledge sharing and solidarity within the steward community.

This organising work is long overdue, and while vital, it adds to the already significant demands placed on stewards. I want to extend heartfelt gratitude to everyone contributing their time and energy to these processes. The success of the ELC is intertwined with the well-being of our stewards.

Worker Members

Navigating organisational changes, unexpected planning decisions and fundraising demands - all alongside the significant logistics of running the cooperative - have put an immense strain on the staff team this year. At times the team has been stretched beyond its limits, yet they have consistently shown up with compassion and courage.

Working alongside such a dedicated team is truly inspiring, but it's important to recognise that even the best teams have their breaking points. The staff are navigating uncharted territory daily, often being required to create solutions as they go.

The team has recognised the need for improved processes to reduce complexity and ease some of the ongoing pressures. This is work that has already begun and will continue into next year. The persistence and dedication of the staff team is carrying the ELC through these demanding times.

Looking to the future

In 2024 the ELC made huge progress toward the ambitious objectives outlined in the new strategic direction. In 2025 the intention is consolidation. It is no small thing to build an organisation in the space between the dominant system and the new world we are creating.

As I step down from the board this year I am so proud of the evolution toward maturity I have witnessed and I'm excited to follow our pioneering journey in the years to come.



ELC Sites Map

We have 6 sites in England and Wales at various stages of development. Each site is home to 3 or more ecological smallholding plots, meaning the ELC has the potential to support around 25 land-based businesses.

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

Martinsfield, Arlington, East Sussex
Allwood Farm, Aweside Farm and Clearwater Farm

Furzehill Green, Gower, Glamorganshire
Cae Tan CSA, The Rowan Tree and one OPD plot available

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

Orchard Park, Upton Cross, Cornwall
Wild Tor Organics, Trelowen Flowers and one available plot

Maesgwyn Isaf, Llanboidy, Carmarthenshire (owned by ELT)
Good Earth Organics and plots available

Ragmans Lane Farm, Lydbrook, Gloucestershire*
Ragmans Lane Market Garden, and the Willow Bank



**Ragmans Lane Farm will come under the ownership of the ELT in autumn 2024*

What We Do

The ELC in numbers 2023-24



Our Land

The ELC currently owns **6 sites** across England and Wales, totalling a **169.4 acres**. These sites are home to **12 ecological farms and land based businesses**, with another 5 in the pipeline



Our Community

Our cooperative is made up of **22 steward members** who rent or lease ELC land; **12 part-time worker members,** and 448 investor members. There are currently **8 people on the board of directors**- 3 steward members, 3 worker members and 2 co-opted members.



Community Outreach
Stewards held 6 community engagement events across our sites; and provided 1000's of hours volunteering opportunities

Site Infrastructure

Temporary planning permission was granted for 3 ecological smallholdings. 1 barn was built & installed with PV solar panels.

2023 -2024

Ecological Land Workers

2 new farm stewards were adopted into the ELC at our Martinsfield site in Arlington

Ecology
Ecological surveys were carried out at 6 ELC sites. Biodiversity had increased at 4 of our sites.


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 2023-24 (using acreage as points)

Our sites are Greenham Reach (21 acres), Martinsfield (18.5 acres), Furzehill (18 acres), Wyvern Fields (21 acres), Orchard Park (20.4 acres), and Maesgwyn Isaf (67 acres).

	At 1st June 2022	At 1st June 2023	At 1st June 2024
Acres secured	145.9	164.9	164.9
Consultation complete	145.9	164.9	164.9
Pre planning Application submitted	98.9	98.9	98.9
Planning application validated	98.9	98.9	98.9
Planning application decision	60.5	86.9	92.9
Planning conditions / appeal completed	39.5	60.5	98.9
Let to small holders	48	69	72.5
First accounts / wildlife survey	72.5	72.5	72.5
Profitability achieved	39.5	42	50.5
Permanent planning permission	68	87	87
Total 'points'	823.6	951.5	995.5
Progress for the year (in points)	182.4	127.9	56.4

What We Do

Site Monitoring Reports for 2023-24

Greenham Reach, Mid Devon

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



Greenham Reach has been home to ELC farm stewards for more than 10 years. It is currently home to three ecological land based businesses- Steepholding, Wild Geese Acres, and Crystal.

Ecology at Greenham Reach

The site is well established and hosts a rich mosaic of habitats across the three holdings, with now mature hedgerows, orchards and wooded areas. The management focus has moved towards maintenance of habitats rather than habitat creation.

Ecological surveys have been carried out at Greenham Reach regularly since 2009. The 2023 report reflected that "*in the 13 years since ELC management began, the site has improved greatly in terms of overall ecosystem services and particularly for biodiversity.*"

The site hosts a locally important species rich grassland located on the NE slope. Stewards across the site are proactively looking at management options for this area and how the responsibility can be better shared across site stewards.

Photo credit: Ruth O'Brien

Hedgerow restoration

The stewards recently hosted a hedge laying course, attended by 30 people, to learn skills and build capacity in maintaining hedges using traditional methods. The 2023 ecology report celebrated the replanting of field boundaries which have restored ecological connectivity to the landscape, supporting a wide range of species.

Site Infrastructure

Across the site,there are well established systems for managing the shared infrastructure and waste. These are working well to support the three smallholdings without any adverse environmental effect.

The solar power and water systems are cooperatively managed by the stewards; regular water testing is carrier out and potential contamination issue are dealt with appropriately.

The solar system at Greenham is ageing and less efficient than modern systems installed elsewhere, and this leads to regular generator use during the winter months of 1-2 hours per day.



What We Do

Crystal's catering business "Landwich", which produce home grown preserves and street food sandwiched operates primarily from a unit off site.

This has highlighted to the ELC some of the barriers around off-grid businesses, infrastructure requirements and food safety that will continue to be explored, along with how systems can be upgraded.

The stewards continue to host regular volunteers, organise workdays and make this beautiful site open to their customers, supporters and members of the public.





Photo credits: Crystal; Ruth O'Brien

Orchard Park, East Cornwall

Orchard Park is undergoing an amazing transformation this year. What started as a bare field site is soon to become home to two ecological land-based businesses.

Orchard Park is a 20 acre site comprising of two fields on the southern edge of Bodmin Moor in East Cornwall. Historically, this land was an apple orchard attached to the neighbouring farm, the juice and cider providing the family with a safe source of hydration.

The site was bought by the ELC from neighbouring Netherton Farm in 2018, and gained temporary planning permission for three low-impact residential smallholdings in 2022.

New farm stewards at Orchard Park

Recruiting farm stewards at Orchard Park proved challenging for many reasons, but we're really happy thattwo new land-based enterprises are set to join the cooperative at the site. We're looking forward to welcoming market garden Wild Tor Organics, and biodynamic flower farm, Trelowen, at Orchard Park.

The third plot at Orchard Park, a 3.7 acre self contained field, is currently unoccupied, and we are seeking farm stewards for this plot.

Site development

Under the coordination of local site manager Verity Groom, work has got underway to develop the site for our new farm stewards. This has proved a





juggling act between our core environmental commitments, the needs of the local community and financial constraints.

We will build much needed infrastructure at the site in the summer and autumn of 2024. This will include improving the access track to the site, preparing an area for hardstanding, installing a bore hole and demarcating the permissive footpath around the edge of the field.

Farm stewards have started to prepare their plots, by marking out areas for their dwellings, and sowing biofumigation crops within their growing areas to manage any potential pests.

In 2024 we also plan to raise a communal barn, install solar panels and rainwater harvesting, as well as plant 220 metres of new hedgerow on the site.

Ecology at Orchard Park

A baseline ecological survey was conducted at Orchard Park in 2020. The report concluded that the grassland itself was species poor with little existing value to wildlife. However it was noted that "*it is likely that the small-scale agricultural production proposed will be considerable benefit to the overall biodiversity of the area*"

The hedgerows surrounding the site were deemed to be of greater importance for wildlife, with potential for them to provide habitat for local dormice and bat populations.

We will conduct further surveys in the future to measure how the enterprises of our new stewards benefit local biodiversity, and look forward to sharing the results



What We Do

Martinsfield, West Sussex

There are currently two smallholding farms on site at Martinsfield, with a third being rented on a short term contract. A refusal for permanent permission is being appealed at this site.



Martinsfield is currently home to Allwood Farm which focuses on leaves and aromatic plants, and Aweside Farm growing edible flowers. The third plot is currently being let to Clearwater Farm on a short term tenancy.

Planning at Martinsfield

The last 12 months at Martinsfield has been dominated by the application for permanent planning permission. This was disappointingly refused in March 2024 despite farm stewards going above and beyond to meet the financial viability requirements set out by the local council.

This refusal is now going through an appeal process.

Smallholdings at Martinsfield

Both farms at Martinfields are financially viable. The stewards were engaged in full time agricultural work (at least 1 per holding) and were meeting more than 50% of their basic income needs from the agricultural businesses.

Allwood hosted over 1200 hours of volunteering and Aweside hosted events aimed at new entrants with DEFRA and the Land Workers Alliance and other group tours throughout the year.

Ecology at Martinsfield

The most remarkable increases in recent ecological surveys were observed in pollinator populations, earth worms and invertebrates with over 60 new species recorded since our baseline survey in 2020.

The prevalence of flowering plants at Aweside Farm, producing year-round nectar sources was noted as particularly beneficial.

Landscape features that support biodiversity have continued to be added, such as a new pond established at Aweside Farm. The inclusion of low management wildlife areas on site have meant that snakes, lizards and hedgehogs have all been spotted.

Large-scale tree and hedge planting across all farms has largely been completed, an stewards are engaged in ongoing work to care for hedgerows, and fill in gaps when trees have been lost due to droughts.

Infrastructure at Martinsfield

Perennial plantings of willow and reeds to take up nutrients from grey water are present or are planned when permanent dwellings are permitted, and no pollution or contamination issues have been identified across the three holdings.

Furzehill Green, Glamorganshire

Furzehill is home to the Rowan Tree, who run a One Planet Development (OPD) smallholding on the site. Land is also rented by neighbouring Cae Tan CSA. There is one remaining OPD plot which we are seeking farm stewards for.



Furzehill Green is situated in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on the Gower Peninsula in South Wales.

The site is currently shared by Cae Tan, a community supported agriculture business, and the Rowan Tree, who focus on cut flowers and small-scale veg boxes.

Horticulture at Furzehill Green

Trevor and Bettina of the Rowan Tree gained One Planet Development planning permission at the end of 2023, and moved on to site in low impact cabin. They are currently cultivating 1 acre of flower gardens, with plans to increase the area substantially once a full lease is signed.

Cae Tan reported 14,000m2 of beds under cultivation at Furzehill. This is helping the thriving CSA to produce 100 small and 35 large weekly veg boxes all year round for local people.

Community engagement

Both enterprises have put a lot of work into community engagement at Furzehill. This has included weekly volunteer days, hosting 4 school and university visits, a combined open day, and pick you own flower events.

Photo credits: The Rowan Tree

The site also held four tree planting days hosting over 40 volunteers, with 100 fruit and coppice trees planted at Cae Tan and 700 hedging trees planted at the Rowan Tree.

Ecology at Furzehill Green

In the last ecological survey carried out in August 2023, hedgerows were found to have increased in size with more ground flora, likely offering shelter to a range of protected species.

The report also noted significant changes in the relative abundance of birds- "*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*"

This observation is supported by Trevor and Bettina's reporting of tree pipits, tawny owl and dunnock on the site - all appearing on the UK amber list of birds of conservation concern.

An increase in invertebrate biomass was also suggested, which has the potential to support bats, breeding and wintering birds, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals.



Wyvern Fields, South Somerset

Temporary planning permission was granted to Wyvern Fields in May 2022. The site is now home to three ecological land-based businesses.



Wyvern Fields is home to heritage fruit tree nursery Cider Apple Trees, market garden Off Grid Organics, and Woodland Farm producing vegetables for a farm-to-fork business.

Site Development

The site at Wyvern Fields has seen significant changes in the last twelve months, as Kumar from Woodland Farm and Cam from Off Grid Organics have their first full year on site.

Both enterprises have been developing infrastructure and plantings to support their farm holdings, in line with the site plans submitted for the planning application.

This includes erecting polytunnels, planting orchards and agroforestry areas, cultivating new growing spaces, and installing fencing.

Cider Apple Trees has been established on site for a longer period but continues to expand their nursery tree populations, fruit and nut orchard and copses within the pasture paddocks.

Livestock

Cider Apple Trees and Off Grid Organics both have poultry integrated into their growing systems to provide natural pest control. Cider Apple Trees also have a flock of sheep and pigs which contribute significantly to their subsistence needs. Animal welfare is assessed against the RSPCAs five freedoms and animal welfare standards were assessed as high.

Community Engagement

The stewards at the site report many positive interactions with the local community and attendance at parish events. The farm holdings seem to be integrating well into the local area and developing positive business and customer relationships.

Stewards have also worked together to develop plans for a Wyvern Fields collective to make use of ELC retained land on the site. A site wide open day is planned for September 2024.

Ecology at Wyvern Fields

The 2023 ecological survey reported that biodiversity on the site appeared to have improved considerably- "*While the grassland was still species-poor and*



Photo credits: Cider Apple Trees

dominated by a limited selection of competitive grasses, it was thought likely to be of considerable value to a wider range of invertebrates, small mammals and consequently to predatory species including bats."

The report also noted improvements to the structure of the hedges, and that they are likely "*to be of far greater value to breeding and wintering birds and potentially also to dormice. Tall hedges are also used by feeding bats."*

Infrastructure at Wyvern Fields

A timber frame communal barn, PV solar array and mains water connections were completed in the summer of 2023.

The PV solar system seems effective in meeting the domestic power needs of the stewards and the generator was only in use for a total of 3 days and 7 hours over the first 11 months,

The generator is fitted with a timer to ensure compliance with planning restrictions, and has a low decibel rating to ensure minimal disturbance to neighbours.

The solar system also records power usage for each plot which facilitates coordination and effective management of shared resources. These types of advances in the functionality of off-grid systems allow for clear data to be recorded that assists with the ELC monitoring processes.









Photo credits: Cider Apple Trees; Off-Grid Organics

What We Do

Maesgwyn Isaf, Carmarthenshire

Maesgwyn Isaf farm is a beautiful 67-acre farm gifted to our sister charity the ELT in 2023. Our vision is to cultivate a thriving hub for ecological farmers and land workers at the farm.



Maesgwyn Isaf farm was gifted to the Ecological Land Trust in July 2022, by Jenn and Stuart Carter, who owned the farm since 2002. Passionate about the environment, the Carters created an extensive native woodland-planting 13,000 trees across the farm, as well as installing a 6kW wind turbine.

First steps

The farm has been looked after by amazing caretakers Kris and Ellis, who set about beginning renovations to the farmhouse and bringing the land back under sustainable management. However, following their decision to move to the ELC site in Cornwall to set up their own market garden closer to family, we now welcome our new caretakers Danny and Tenesia to Maesgwyn Isaf.

Bringing farmers back to the land

In the autumn of 2024 we will welcome two new sets of farm stewards to Maesgwyn Isaf. Caretakers Danny and Tenesia will be growing ingredients and the farm for their natural skincare business, Earth to Earth Organics.

We will also welcome new stewards Fran and Michael in autumn 2024, who will graze rare breed sheep and grow produce

The stewards are already planning how they can use the farm as a community asset, with ideas around a community bakery and shop, and workshop spaces.

Site Development

Our medium term plan is to convert the farmhouse into permanent accommodation for our farm stewards, as well as improve the outbuildings. As ever this is dependent on budget, and we are in the process of exploring funding avenues for this work.

Ecology at Maesgwyn Isaf

A baseline ecological survey was conducted in October 2023. The survey found that the woodland, hedgerows and mature trees on the site had potential to support a range of protected and priority species, which should be protected and enhanced. Outbuilding also showed potential for bat roosts.

The report suggested the de-intensification and diversification of agricultural practices should have a net benefit to biodiversity. The site also has good potential to enhance existing habitats and create new habitats such as species rich field margins, pollinator strips and ponds.



Photo credit: Kris Fowler

Our Learning and Development

Stewards Gathering 2024

In February 2024 stewards from each our occupied sites attended the second annual Stewards Gathering at Ragmans Lane Farm in the Forest of Dean.

ELC farm stewards from across England and Wales came together for the second ever steward gathering.

The gathering at the beautiful Ragmans Lane Farm consisted of focused sessions on planning, monitoring and fundraising from ELC worker members.

The steward group also took part in developmental sessions to learn more about each other and find ways to exchange skills. They also explored how to organise themselves as a steward group and started to plan the areas of focus to take over the coming year.

Outcomes from the gathering

Since the gathering in February the steward group has grown in number and began meeting monthly to develop policy and processes that will support their involvement across the coop.

Steward members are working hard to draw together the expertise and experience available in the steward group to apply it to the issues that they commonly face.



The groups first success was agreeing a 'roles and responsibilities' document that defines what it is to be an ELC farm steward.

Since then a consultation process has been established and trialled to support the inclusion of all stewards in key issues affecting the coop. This aims to overcome barriers to participation in the wider coop, such as the long hours that stewards work on the land.

It is clear that these new pathways for involvement are helping stewards to feel more empowered to voice the changes

Feedback

After the gathering ELC stewards were asked to reflect on what they'd learnt about the steward network.

"*Our solidarity, unity"*

"Strong willingness to engage and pull together to support ELC as a whole"

"Stewards want more empowerment"

"That we can all choose to be empowered from this within the organisation. How empowering structure systems framework are & policy!!"

"that everyone is navigating, it's still a new process alot of unknowns"

"There is more shared than not. There is desire for togetherness. But there is very varied lived experience"

"We all want the same thing"

Sustainable Housing For Land Workers

In December 2023, we took a significant step towards reshaping the housing landscape for land workers. With funding from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust's Sustainable Future fund, we're embarking on an ambitious project to research and develop housing that supports the needs of the agroecological sector.

Supporting New Entrants through Safe, Affordable, and Sustainable Housing

Today, many in our ELC steward community start their journey with a blank canvas – a bare field that requires them to build a home and establish a farm business.

With limited budgets and the modest earnings typical of early farm life, many stewards reside in caravans that are often inadequate for the UK's harsh winters. This reality places a huge physical, mental, and emotional burden on them, just as they're beginning one of the most challenging careers: farming.

With this funding, we're working to change that. Our goal is to design housing options that allow stewards to transition smoothly from temporary to permanent, resilient dwellings.

This project opens the door to innovation in sustainable, affordable housing, improving both wellbeing and economic stability for stewards and fostering a thriving community of land-based workers in the UK.

Creating Impact through Policy and Planning Reform

We're not only focused on providing practical housing solutions. We also recognise the importance of systemic change. We will conduct research with local planning authorities, understanding their needs and advocating for low-impact, ecological housing in Local Plans.

These plans are critical in guiding decisions on planning applications, making it essential that they reflect the realities and needs of sustainable, low-income communities.

At the national level, we will continue to work alongside organisations like the Landworkers' Alliance, Shared Assets, and community farms, lobbying to incorporate agroecological principles in national planning guidance.

By championing planning reform and sustainable housing, we are advocating for a future in which those dedicated to land work can find the support, security, and stability they need.

This project will run from summer 2024 to November 2025, and we are thrilled to welcome two new team members: architect James Binning as Project Manager and Chartered Planner Sandra Tuck as Planning Research Manager. Their expertise will guide us on this next exciting phase delivering the ELC's vision for the agroecological sector.



Photo credit: Cider Apple Trees

Our Learning and Development

Worker's Survey

As of June 2024, the ELC has 12 staff members and a further 5 freelance worker members.

Of the team: 3 are employed specifically for project work; 7 are on permanent contracts; 1 is on a fixed-term cover contract; 5 are site managers at the ELC sites; 1 is our freelance Planning Manager (which has moved from an employed role to freelance)

All staff members work part-time and remotely to support the work of the ELC.

This year's survey shows an increase in the relationship between the worker team and the board as well as an improvement around conflict resolution, both of which were highlighted as priorities in last year's report.

A common theme in the 12 months covered by this report has been a feeling of a lack of staff capacity to carry out the organisational activities of the ELC and this is reflected in the results of the survey – particularly in response to questions 1 and 6 – as well as the comments received along with the survey results.

Survey questions and comments	June '23	June '24
Everyone at the co-op is working toward the same organisational goals.	4.4	3.8
I see a clear link between my work and the ELC's goals.	4.7	4.4
The ELC board is sincerely interested in the needs and welfare of the employees.	3.5	3.9
When conflicts arise at the co-op, they are effectively resolved.	3.2	3.5
Employees are treated fairly and equally at the ELC	4.5	4.4
I receive good levels of support in my work from my co-workers.	4.5	3.6
I am fairly paid for the work I do relative to other local opportunities.	4	3.9
Employee ideas often result in changes at the ELC.	4.2	3.9
ELC workers' overall satisfaction score.	4.1	3.9

Join the farming revolution: regular giving scheme

In 2024 our sister charity, the Ecological Land Trust, launched a regular giving scheme inviting people to support small-scale ecological land work in the UK via the work of the ELC.



The Ecological Land Trust is a registered charity supporting the charitable aspects of the ELC's work.

The Trust also owns some of the farms the ELC manages, including Maesgwyn Isaf

Cultivating a landscape where people and nature can co-exist

In order to raise much needed funds to support the development of the farms into thriving hubs for small-scale agroecology, the Ecological Land Trust has set up a regular giving scheme.

Individuals are invited to make a regular donation to the Trust. This will support work such as:

- Improving the biodiversity at the Trust's farm sites, as well as sites owned by the ELC. This includes developing key habitats such as hedgerows and wildflower meadows, as well as monitoring the health of our soils and wider ecology on a regular basis.
- Supporting ecological farmers and land workers in the UK, by offering accessible land and resources for agroecology. This includes providing low-impact infrastructure such as off-grid utilities, and outbuildings for land workers at our sites.
- Demonstrating the benefits and viability of small-scale ecological farming and land work to the wider public and policy makers, through monitoring and reports.

Join the farming revolution

If you would like to help the Ecological Land Trust support ecological farming in the UK you can do so via their website.

Regular donors will be kept updated on the impact their donation has had on agroecology and biodiversity on our farms, and will be invited to events on the land.

Donors will also be invited to apply to become supporter members of the Ecological Land Cooperative.

For more details please visit:
www.ecologicalland.org

Ecological
Land
Trust

Gift Your Land- campaign successes

In 2022 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

Thanks to the incredible generosity of donors, our sister charity, the Ecological Land Trust (ELT), is set to own two gifted farms. Maesgwyn Isaf, a 67-acre farm in Carmarthenshire, was gifted to the ELT in 2022, whilst a second gifted farm, Ragmans Lane, will be taken on by the trust in July 2024. Both farms will be managed by ELC farm stewards

Ragmans Lane Farm

Ragmans Lane farm is a 60 acre organic farm in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, comprising of pasture, orchards, market gardens and a residential teaching space.

The farm was owned and managed by the inspirational Matt Dunwell for over 33 years, who did incredible work building the profile of Ragmans into a farm known for teaching, experimenting and providing a platform for people to get access to land.

Matt has decided to step back, and has gifted the farm to the Ecological Land Trust to take it into its next chapter. We'd like to extend a huge thank you to Matt for entrusting the Trust with Ragmans Farm, and are excited for its future.





We are also really pleased to welcome Ragmans Lane's existing land based enterprises into the cooperative as steward members. This includes the Willow Bank who produce living willow for structures and environmental restoration; and Ragmans Lane Market Garden, who grow organic produce for sale to local restaurants, shops and veg box customers

Supporting Ragmans Lane Farm

You can support Ragmans Lane Farm into its next chapter by making use of its meeting space and 15 bed bunkhouse, perfect for organisational meetings, residential training courses or big family get together's. All profit made from the spaces will be spent directly on improving and maintaining the farm during its next chapter.

Gifting Land

If you have land you would like to gift for ecological agriculture and land work in the future, please get in touch. You can find out more information via our website: www.ecologicalland.org/gift-your-land

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

- The A-team Foundation
- Esmee Fairbairn Foundation
- Farming the Future
- The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
- Patagonia
- Treebeard Trust
- All the individuals giving to the Ecological Land Trust

Ecological Land Cooperative

For a living, working countryside

Find Out More

Website: www.ecologicalland.coop

Facebook: @ecolandcoop

Instagram: @eco_land_coop

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Ecological Land Cooperative is the trading name of Ecological Land Limited registered with the FCA under the Cooperative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, Reg. No 30770R.