



Trustee Annual Report 2020/2021

Forres Friends of Woods and Fields (SCO 50361)



Word of Introduction

Forres Friends of Woods and Fields is a local environmental community-based charity situated in Forres, Scotland. Since its establishment in 2020, it has steadily grown, despite the challenges the COVID-19 Pandemic has brought to our community. This Annual Report 2020/2021 aims to outline and summarise the mission and vision of the charity, our main outputs and impacts, and the financial accounts.

The Annual Report is a legal obligation under the rules of the independent regulator of charities in Scotland, OSCR (Scottish Charity Regulator), to ensure transparency, reliability, and good practice from their registered charities. This report covers the period from the 31st of July 2020 until the 31st of July 2021.

Thus, the Trustees of Forres Friends of Woods and Fields are proud to formally introduce our first Annual Report 2020/2021.

This report is signed and approved by the Trustees of Forres Friends of Woods and Fields:

Nick Molnar

Mick Drury

George Paul

Fiona Chalmers

Lin Batten

Charity name: Forres Friends of Woods and Fields

Registered Charity Number: SC050361

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Facebook: facebook.com/ForresFWF/

Twitter: @ForresFWF

LinkedIn: [Linkedin.com/company/forres-friends-of-woods-and-fields/](https://linkedin.com/company/forres-friends-of-woods-and-fields/)

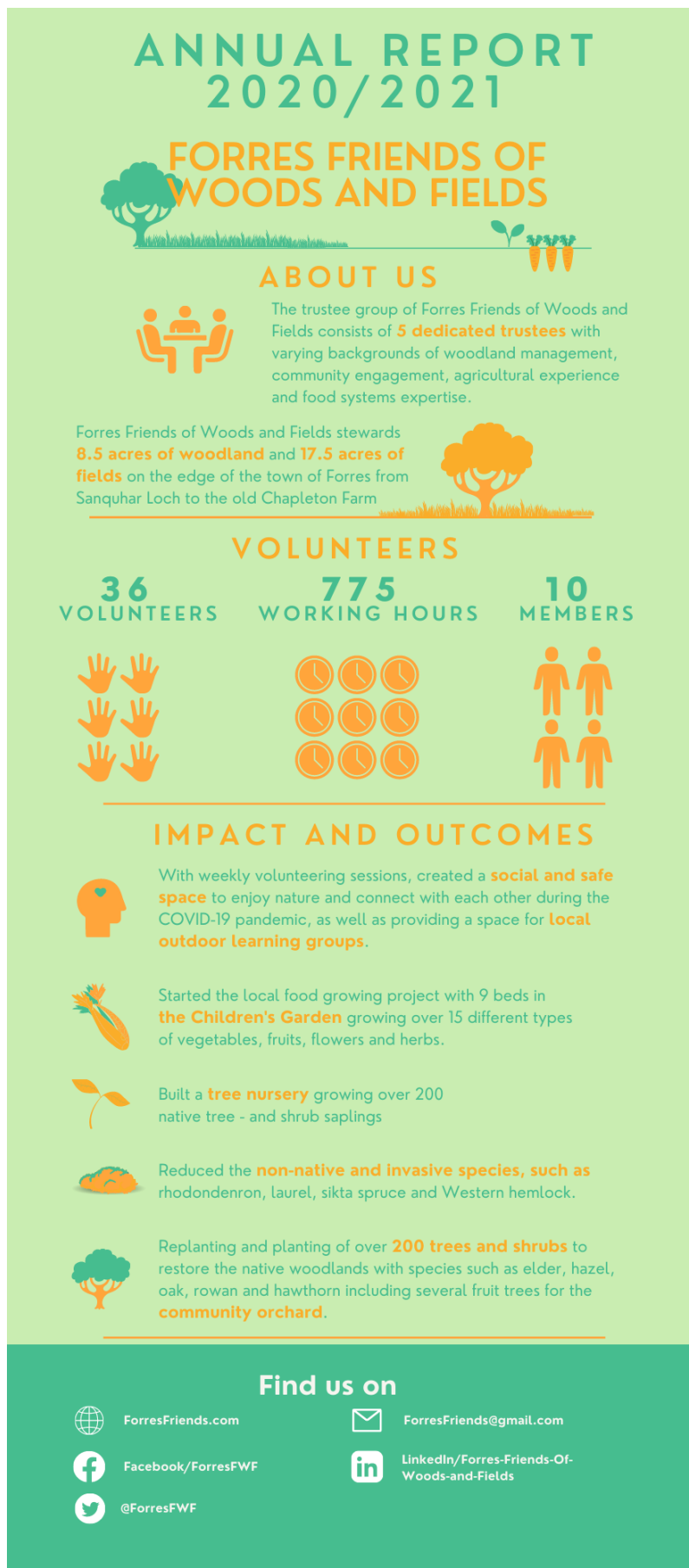


Figure 1. Infographic and Summary of the Annual Report 2020/2021

About Us

The aim of Forres Friends of Woods and Fields (FFWF) since its establishment in 2020, is to steward 26 acres of land on the edge of the town of Forres, Moray, Scotland. The charity is a community-based environmental charity intent on restoring our woodlands, river, and fields, supporting local food sustainability, and providing a social and safe space to reconnect with nature.

The land includes Kennel Wood on the ridge to the east of Sanquhar Loch, with its adjacent Kennel fields, and also the Chapleton Fields, and areas of woodland alongside the Mosset Burn to the south-east.

Our land borders that of other well-established environmental organisations in the community of Forres, namely the Sanquhar Pond Group which cares for the Council owned woodlands around Sanquhar Loch, and the Forres Community Woodland Trust, which are restoring the adjoining woodlands. These areas together form a vital and intriguing wildlife and recreational asset to the local town.

Whilst Forres is already blessed with numerous green spaces, it was felt that the opportunity, when this particular piece of land became available, was irresistible. Hence, in 2020, it was acquired from the Altyre Estate and its stewardship was taken on by the charity. The fields, once farmland, and the woodland had been neglected and the access and benefits underused by the local population. A moment had come to fit an important missing piece of the jigsaw into Forres' green spaces.

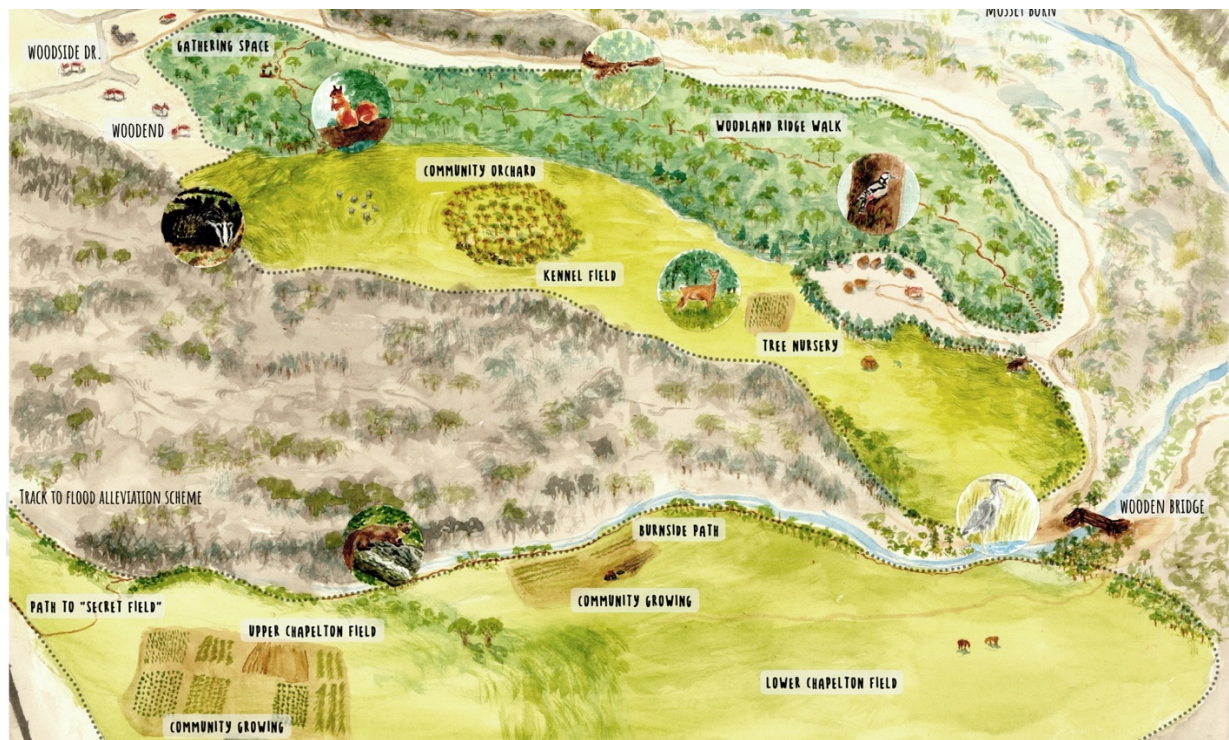


Figure 2. Map of the land of Forres Friends of Woods & Fields - Illustrated by Julie Adam

Structure, Governance and Management

There are 5 dedicated trustees with varying backgrounds and expertise (see [website](#) for descriptions). We have regularly held trustee meetings on zoom over the last year to progress the work of the charity, discuss projects, aims and objectives.

We generally reach agreement by consensus, with the views of our volunteers taken into consideration during the Trustee meetings. The decision-making process states that we make decisions by consensus in agreement with all the trustees, save one trustee who has the role of advisory consultant for the charity.

We have also organised a visioning-workshop with a limited number of committed volunteers, mostly due to COVID-restrictions. In this workshop, we developed a vision, clarified the mission statement and agreed on the core values of this charity. At this moment, the landowners, one of which is the chair, founder, and trustee of FFWF, are exploring the possibility of various types of lease arrangement. This would allow the charity to be eligible for grants.

Our board of trustees are currently developing a Management Plan, which is yet to be finalised.

Trustee recruitment and appointment

Table 1. Trustee overview

Current Trustee Name	Office	Dates if not acted for the whole year
Nick Molnar	Chair	18-07-2020 - Present
George Paul	Treasurer	18-07-2020 – Present
Mick Drury	Health & Safety Officer	18- 07 -2020 – Present
Lin Batten	Secretary	01-02-2021 - Present
Fiona Chalmer	Trustee	23-02-2021 – present
Past Trustee Name		
Eleanor Garty	N.A.	18-07-2020 – 23-02-2021

The charity currently has 5 trustees, who gradually came together with shared environmental interests to join the charity, founded by Nick Molnar. One former trustee withdrew, realising that she would not have the time to devote to the organisation. We are currently considering whether we need to recruit one or two more trustees to broaden our collective experience. This would be through invitation, an initial meeting by walking the land to familiarise the prospective trustee with our aims and objectives, followed by meeting with the current trustees to discuss and decide.

Whilst some projects have come to realisation in the charity's first year, our potential growth has been hampered by the restrictions presented by the COVID pandemic. This is particularly apparent in the limited public consultation that has

been possible. However, one of our trustees has taken the lead to applying for the National Lottery Awards for All funding program to fund the development of a vision statement, leading to a structured community consultation, followed by drop-in events on the land as soon as possible when restrictions allow.

Objectives and Activities

By managing this land with environmental consideration, FFWF aims to create a new space for recreational activity for all inhabitants of Forres and the surrounding area. Also, we aim to provide a venue for outdoor education for all ages as well as for cultural activities and events to promote physical and mental well-being.

Our future ambitions and plans moreover include projects focussed on local food sustainability.

Our Vision

- Land, the river, people and wildlife living and working in harmony -

Our Mission

- To cultivate an understanding and appreciation of nature, with community wellbeing at its core, through land stewardship and local food sustainability -

Managing Invasive Species

Our priority is to manage the invasive species within the 8 1/2-acre woodland. The woodland is officially classed as a long-established plantation and it is a fine and unusual local example of a substantial stand of oak trees. This, however, was in danger of being overgrown by invasive rhododendron and laurel, and thereby limiting the reproduction and growth of native species. To restore the natural balance of the ecosystem, professional input was necessary. The charity therefore successfully applied to the Berry Burn Community Fund and used the grant towards managing and largely reducing these exotic invasive species (See figure 2.).

Boost of £11k for beauty spot

By Garry McCartney
garry.mccartney@forresgazette.co.uk

VOLUNTEERS working on a local beauty spot have received a welcome cash injection.

Green-fingered Nick Molnar, who is also involved with the Forres Community Orchard and Sanguhar Community Garden, is grateful for £11,100 from Berry Burn Community Fund to eradicate invasive laurel and rhododendron on land close to the community garden.

Clearing the area will enable it to be turned into a new, attractive piece of woodland for public access.

Mr Molnar has also helped form a new charity, called Forres Friends of Woods and Fields, which will be the new registered steward of the land.

He said: "The volunteers who began work on these woods last autumn on the south side of Sanguhar pond are delighted as it was very soon apparent that they would need professional contractors to clear a huge amount on the eight-acre site. "The Berry Burn Community Fund has now made this possible."

The working group has hired local company EcoHighland Tree Services to start work in the autumn once the bird nesting season has ended.

Mr Molnar said: "Once this is

completed, large parts of the wood – which until now have resembled an impenetrable jungle – will become accessible to the public and native flora and fauna should establish, through the planting of native trees, shrubs such as birch, hazel, hawthorn, elder, rowan and holly.

"This which will help create a new harmonious woodland."

The group will implement a management plan for the woodland.

The proposal will include volunteer opportunities for all ages including outdoor learning as well as activities such as the John Muir awards.

Findhorn-based environmental charity Wild Things has been offered a chance to run activities in the woods for young people and the elderly.

Outdoor and Woodland Learning (OWL) Scotland, supported by Scottish Forestry, has also expressed an interest in holding forest school classes there.

Mr Molnar added: "The local schools are all within easy walking distance and they would be welcome to use the woods for the outdoor learning component of the Curriculum for Excellence as well as the H15 and Dynamic Youth Awards.

"Other outdoor teachers might offer tutorials for all ages to increase



The area of woodland is to the left of the path around Sanguhar Pond.

awareness and knowledge of the natural world and woodland crafts.

"The woods could also be used as a place for the new NHS Green Prescriptions scheme, offering activity in nature to enhance physical and mental wellbeing."

If you would like to get involved or for more information email nicpip@googlemail.com or phone 01309 671112.



Nick Molnar and residents on the other side of the wood.



Some of the clearing crew working with tools of the trade.

Figure 3. Forres Gazette on FFWF being awarded a grant from the Berry Burn Community Fund.

Volunteers and volunteer activities

After this, we have organised regular volunteer sessions from 10:00 to 13:00 every Wednesday and every second Saturday. This steadily increased the volunteer group, now totalling 36 people with an average of 10 participating in the regular work mornings. Over the last year, we have carried out approximately 775 hours of volunteer work during 54 volunteer sessions.

Our charity also includes a membership scheme, though this is still in development.

These sessions included a social tea break and some organised activities surrounding woodland management and food growing. Our activities and our accomplishments with the volunteers are outlined below.



Figure 4. Tea break during a volunteering session.

Tree Planting

In the woodlands, we have begun by manually removing non-native species, such as sitka spruce and western hemlock. We have replanted these cleared areas with an assortment of native species including hazel, gean (wild cherry), rowan, and elder. These will eventually grow into an understorey, a level of vegetation above the ground cover, but underneath the forest canopy. Traditionally, such woodland structure is upheld since it provides a favourable habitat for birds and animals and will also provide foraging possibilities for the community. In this, both our volunteers and trustees have enjoyed the experience of learning tree-planting techniques and best-practices from our trustee Mick Drury and former trustee Eleanor Garty, both experienced tree planters with Trees for Life and the Woodland Trust Scotland respectively.

Tree Nursery

In line with the ambition to rewild and replant the woodlands, FFWF has built up a small tree nursery to raise local saplings sustainably for future planting. This allows the charity to become less depended on commercial tree nurseries and contribute to the self-sufficiency of the charity. Any potential surplus could be donated for other environmental groups, or potentially sold for a small donation towards the charity. The tree nursery now holds over 200 small saplings of various species including though not limited to oak, hazel, holly, elder, hawthorn, gean (wild cherry), downy birch, alder, walnut, blackcurrant, and bird cherry (See Figure 5.).



Figure 5. Tree Nursery on Kennel Field with regular FFWF volunteers.



Figure 6. A blooming and productive Children's Garden.

Children's Garden & Community Orchard

FFWF's aim of fostering local food sustainability has begun in a small way with the creation of a children's garden. A small start, but already attracting various volunteers interested in food growing, including the smallest members of our community. We have built 9 raised beds and several growing areas around the edges, growing, amongst others, leeks, potatoes, runner beans, broad beans, radishes, beetroot, various kale-species (from the brassica-family), and lettuces.

In the Kennel Field, we have started the work on a community orchard by planting a handful of fruit trees. These are fenced, in order to deter the roaming deer in search of food. In our vision we would like to expand this orchard and create a food foraging forest.



Fin Hoyle, FFWF supervisor Julie Adam, Poppy and her dad Nick Kinnegen getting stuck in to the gardening.

Let's get growing at Sanquhar

GREEN-FINGERED environmentalists are looking for volunteers to take part in a new project.

Having cleared invasive plant species from Sanquhar and planted native trees in their place, Forres Friends of Woods and Fields (FFWF) have started growing vegetables in adjacent fields and are inviting more people to get involved.

FFWF's Nick Molnar was thrilled when some toddlers helped prepare raised growing beds.

He said: "Giving children an early start growing vegetables will give them basis for a lifelong appreciation of healthy food. Poppy Kinnegen (17

months) and Fin Hoyle (3) have been to Chapelton to mix compost into eight raised beds, ready for sowing and planting. They are growing salad leaves, potatoes, leeks and flowers. Peas and beans will follow."

FFWF is restoring woodlands, supporting food sustainability and aiding wellbeing. Its woodland is on the ridge south of Sanquhar, running to the Kennel and Chapleton Fields near the Mosset Burn. The land was acquired from Altyre Estate last year and clearing the ridge at Sanquhar was completed by a contractor paid for with Berry Burn funding.

"It's an ongoing task to keep abreast of regrowth," said Nick,

"as well as removing non-native conifers and replacing with native trees. A team of volunteers has been working in the eight acre woodland throughout the winter and spring."

The site is now more open and inviting. School classes and environmental groups have been holding programmes there.

Nick added: "The lighter landscape will encourage woodland flowers and regrowth of native trees. We hope more people will visit. Volunteers are welcome to ask questions about our aims for this special environment."

To find out more visit www.forresfriends.org, email forresfriends@gmail.com or phone 01309 671112.

Figure 5. Forres Gazette on the opening of the FFWF Children's Garden.

Education and Outdoor Activities

The community engagement is not only illustrated by our volunteer group, but also through our relationship with other organisations. For instance, one of our trustees, George Paul, created a rough log seating area, providing an ideal gathering space for local primary schools and the Forres Academy, as well as outdoor learning groups, such as Earthtime and Wild Things, who have all started to use this site on a regular basis.

A number of seasonal festivals have also taken place on the land, including carol singing in the woodland on Christmas Day and an outdoor theatre company 'The Frozen Charlotte' has been booked for the end of August 2021.

24 Forres Gazette www.forres-gazette.co.uk Wednesday, November 25 to Tuesday, December 1, 2020

Mighty oaks from little...

By Garry McCartney
garry.mccartney@forresgazette.co.uk

PUPILS from two local schools are helping an environmental charity create attractive woodland for everyone to enjoy.

With the assistance of hardworking Anderson's P5 class and Forres Academy students, Forres Friends of Woods and Fields (FFWF) have gathered thousands of acorns, which will eventually be planted on a hill at Sanquhar that has recently been cleared of invasive plant species.

FFWF volunteer Nick Molnar-Annabel said that Martin and Ed Wareham from Christie-Elite Nurseries visited the site and offered free stakes and guards to protect native saplings from roe deer.

He said: "They also made the brilliant suggestion that we gather acorns, of which there are a huge amount this year, for future planting."

"Forres Academy and Anderson's were keen to take this up, and in the following week eager pupils gathered upwards of 1500!"

Christie-Elite are placing the seeds in tree cells which will be planted back in the woods.

"The children will be able to witness their little acorns become mighty oaks as they also enter adulthood," said Nick.

"There will still be plenty available for local groups, foresters and individuals who want to plant oak saplings of very local provenance."

Anderson's P5 teacher, Mr Nigel Sleaford, confirmed his class was very interested in helping because the school recognises how important it is for children to get out into the woods, and develop a sense of responsibility for natural places.

He said: "After years of laurels and rhododendrons covering the floor, it's time to let some young oaks grow."

"We go for weekly walks around Cluny and Sanquhar, and, after noticing all the work being done by volunteers, we decided to help."

"At first we worked to thin out some of the sycamore saplings growing everywhere on the hillside."

"Of course, with the sapling we cut down, we couldn't resist a bit of shelter building! We were pleased that our work let a lot more light onto the floor of the woods so small plants and saplings of native species can develop."

Nick confirmed that many members of the public have expressed surprise at the transformation over two weeks of the "impenetrable jungle" into an open, mixed area of native trees by ECO Highland Tree Services.

Laurel and rhododendron stems were cut as close to ground level as possible and shredded by a large, tracked chipper which spread the chips out over the area.

Nick said: "The previous dark jungle is now full of light and open space. This will allow the woodland to naturally regenerate as well as giving us the opportunity to plant out native species including oak, gale, rowan, elder, holly and birch."

"It is also possible that the existing seed bank, which until now has been suppressed by being robbed of light, will send up a varied woodland flora."

FFWF now want to build steps from the site to the Kennel Field end.

"This will provide a pleasant ridge walk with a view onto the wetland at the end of the Sanquhar Pond," said Nick.

"Also, after the success of the acorn gathering, we hope to encourage more schools activity in the woods."

Email Nick at nicpip@googlemail.com for more information about the Forres Friends of Woods and Fields project.



P5 from Anderson's Mark Currie, Grace Cattrell, Ava Ward and Mya Young holding the bucket of acorns.



Alden Fraser (12) and Noah Thomson (13) from Forres Academy with a few of the acorns they hope will grow into mighty oak trees at Sanquhar.

Figure 6. Forres Gazette on the pupils of Forres Academy gathering acorns with FFWF.

Social Media and Website

FFWF's online presence started in March 2021 when we launched our website and opened several social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Since then, FFWF has gained over 100 followers and likes on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn and has had 130 unique visitors on the website. The charity is regularly contacted via these channels by community members who would be interesting in joining the volunteer sessions. Moreover, FFWF has started collaboration with Forres Local, a local news website, to create a vlog-series on the flora of the stewarded land. The first episode of these series is due to launch mid-august 2021.

Financial Review

Where did our income come from?

As mentioned before under the section 'Managing invasive Species, the largest amount of income (£11,100) came from a very generous donation from the Berry Burn Community Fund. This was to be spent specifically on the removal and control of invasive species such as rhododendron and laurel.

Donations from individuals and groups amounted to £516. Additionally, we sold some surplus compost and scrap metal found on the land and this brought in £85.60.

How did we spend it?

We spent £10,400 of the Berry Burn donation (see above). The balance of £700 will be spent in the coming 2 years to complete the project on the managing of invasive species. £338.50 was spent on administrative costs and fees, including £302 on insurance.

£50 was spent on tree stakes and £75 spent on compost for the children's garden. This leaves us with an end of year balance of £838.50. However, £700 is restricted as mentioned above.

How do we decide how to spend unrestricted funds?

The Treasurer and Chairperson together can agree to an expenditure of up to £50. Expenditure above that must be after a proposal has been put to the Trustees and agreed on.

Prospective Plans for development and growth

During our previously mentioned Visioning-workshop, throughout the Trustee Meetings and as we are growing our community base, many ideas and plans for development and growth have come forward. In this section, we shall outline a few of them.

Community Garden & Expansion of the Orchard

In our vision, as can be seen on the illustrated map (see figure 2.), a community space for growing local food based on organic principles is a vital component. This has started with the Children's Garden, but the charity wants to expand and professionalise the garden in order to make an impact and to contribute to local food resilience in a time when local food becomes increasingly important. In line with this, we would like to see an expansion of the orchard, which should be possible as community support increases.

Cooperation with the Leancoil Trust

Across the road from the upper Chapleton Field is the (currently unoccupied) Leancoil Hospital, a magnificent and historical building established in 1892. The Leancoil Trust is set up to acquire the hospital through a community asset transfer and aims to reopen this as a local community hospital. Our charity has

built a relationship with the Trust and as the FFWF's community food growing project continues to expand, it would be ideally situated for providing therapeutic gardening sessions.

Wildflower meadow

FFWF is also seeking professional advice for the creation of some areas of wildflower meadows. This could involve the introduction of a limited number of grazing animals.

Appreciation

The board of trustees wish to express extreme gratitude to so many who have supported our cause and charity over this last year.

Firstly, we would like to thank our Chair Nick Molnar, with his enthusiasm, dedication, and ability to connect with seemingly everyone in the community and generate support for the charity.

Thank you for all the financial and material donations from our supporters made over the last year. This made much of our work this year possible. Many thanks to all our wonderful volunteers who have joined us in the volunteering sessions and have provided much social relief while working with nature. A special thanks to Julie Adam, for her lovely illustration of the FFWF land, and to Daniel Fitzsimmons, who digitalised the map, to Nick Kinnegen, for his dedicated love for the tree nursery, to Bas van Kempen, who continuously grows and manages the children's garden, and of course to Pip Molnar, for her delicious cakes and snacks during the tea breaks.

Warm Wishes,

Nick Molnar

Date:

Signature:

Mick Drury

Date:

Signature:

George Paul

Date:

Signature:

Fiona Chalmers

Date:

Signature:

Lin Batten

Date:

Signature: