



Friends of Lyncombe Hill Fields Community Interest Company
Directors' Annual Report for the Year Ending 31 May 2021



Introduction

The Friends of Lyncombe Hill Fields CIC (FLHF) was incorporated at Companies House, Cardiff, on 21 May 2020. Its subscribing Members comprise representatives of five local residents' and community associations. It was awarded a Licence to occupy, manage and improve the 10.5 acres of Lyncombe Hill Fields by Bath & North East Somerset Council (B&NES) on 1 September 2020, after nearly two years of negotiations. Its operations commenced following a public launch meeting by Zoom on 19 October 2020. From this a pool of active volunteers was formed. These volunteers have been the key to all that has been achieved since that time.

This report, prepared by the Directors for the first Annual General Meeting of the Company, has the following sections:

1. Vision, Mission and Objectives
2. Outputs for the Year Ending 31 May 2021
3. Finances for the Year Ending 31 May 2021
4. Appointment of Anita Breeze as a Director of the CIC
5. Outline Plans for the Year Ending 31 May 2022
6. Draft Operations Budget for the Year Ending 31 May 2022

1. Vision, Mission and Objectives

Our vision is the simple and memorable phrase "Our Wild Hilltop Paradise", and our Mission is the more explicit "to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the land and maintain its wild nature whilst safeguarding public access".

Our objectives for the calendar year 2021 are summarised in the Management Plan that was agreed with B&NES on 23 December 2020. These objectives have already been largely completed and we are already discussing additional objectives for the coming months with B&NES and with potential funders (see section 5 below).

2. Outputs for the Year Ending 31 May 2021

What did our volunteers do?

Since October 2020, we have had a pool of 30 volunteers helping with our maintenance tasks. Between October 2020 and May 2021 they contributed a total of 983 hours to maintenance tasks. (Other volunteers have led surveys of flora and fauna and have provided other supporting activities). Volunteering takes place principally on Wednesday and Sunday mornings (weather permitting) and with careful planning, we were able to continue throughout two lockdowns. Our volunteers



shifted 18 tonnes of stone to improve two of the designated footpaths



removed 300 sq. metres of brambles from the centre of the North, East and West Fields



cleared 2 skip loads of rubbish from the fields



cleared and dug over 240 sq. metres of steep hillside for the Tiny Forest



“topped out” approximately 5 acres with a field mower



strimmed the Copse (3 times) along with various patches of nettles in the centre of 3 fields



cleared a 200m path along the boundary with Beechen Cliff School in the Inner Field



hand-pruned 300m of neglected hedging



constructed and fitted 6 benches



constructed and fitted 13 bird boxes
and  3 bat boxes



planted 950 saplings



designed and erected 3 sign boards

So what has been achieved?



300 metres of existing footpath has been consolidated mostly with locally sourced “20mm Clean” (non-toxic) demolition waste, making these paths usable all-year round. Previously they could be virtually unpassable from November to April. At each of the entrances there is a location map. In addition there is a large notice board at the Greenway Lane gate providing details of volunteering opportunities along with nature notes on what to look for.



All five fields now have the prospect of being returned to their previous state as unimproved grassland (they are considered semi-improved and close to NVC MG5 at the moment). Large areas of bramble have been removed from the centre of these fields. The early spring “topping-out” cut will be followed by a hay cut in July-September (depending on flowering times) to maximise wild seed retention (see section 5 below).



The “Copse” was an abandoned triangle of scrub between the Inner and West Fields, bounded on all sides by a row of trees. We believe it was used as an animal pound for many years. We found it full of rubbish, scrap metal, abandoned fencing and small dead trees. With the help of Duke of Edinburgh volunteers from Beechen Cliff and Hayesfield schools, it was cleared. The brush collected was stacked up to provide a natural barrier and a wildlife haven. The unofficial path running through it was blocked off to give the area seclusion from dogs. We intend to develop it further to be more welcoming to young children and their carers.



370 mixed native saplings have been planted as hedges to the west and north sides to the Copse, and elsewhere.



All the nesting boxes are numbered. This has made recording observations simpler. Of the 11 erected in November 2020, 7 have residents. One box had 24 feeding visits from parents in one thirty-minute period. The last 2 were erected in May 2021. To date no activity has been observed in the 3 bat boxes.



BUGingham PALACE, set in the North Field is a “bug hotel” made of pallets secured together and filled with sticks and some bricks to provide a home for invertebrates. It has also attracted a number of children who are inevitably drawn into its secrets.



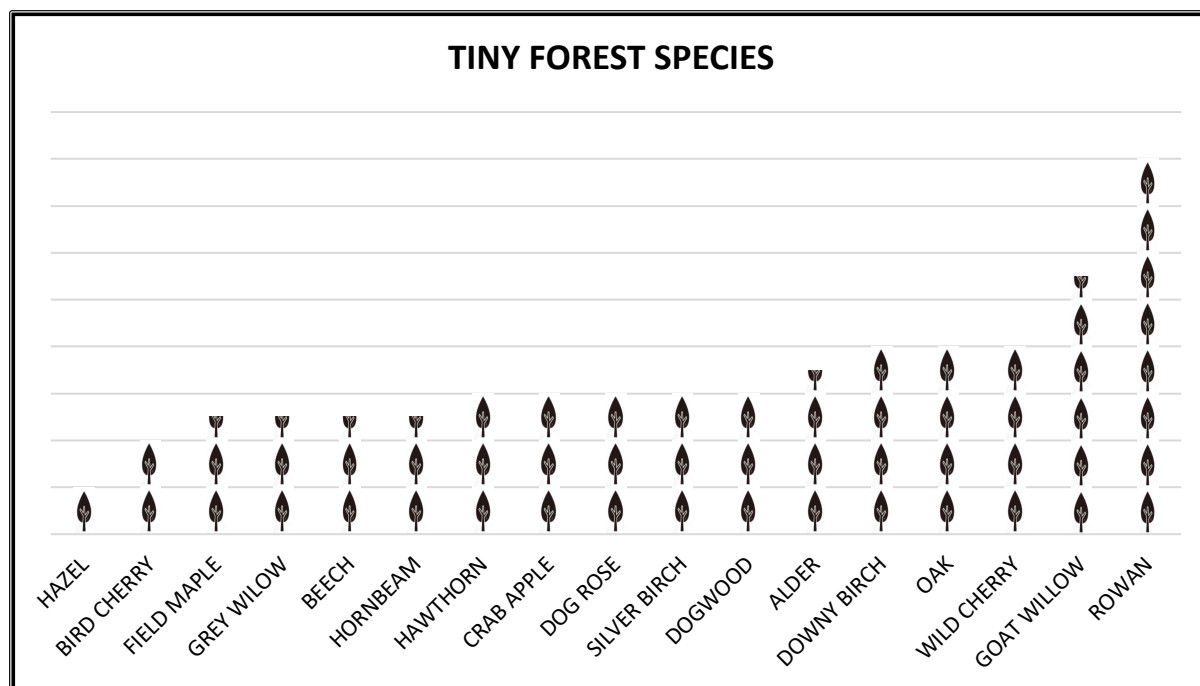
The TINY FOREST was something that emerged from conversations in September and October 2020. The most pressing issues were to find a suitable site and to obtain sufficient saplings to make it viable. Once these had been overcome, the research and planning had to take place within a short period of time. The site (approximately the size of a tennis court) had to be cleared of brambles and a planting plan undertaken. The saplings had to be randomly mixed, with the proviso that the damp-loving species (willows and alders) should sit at the foot of the slope. With the site cleared and dug over, canes were laid out in 21 rows and the saplings planted in the agreed positions. It took just two weeks to plant all the saplings. The inclement weather in late April/early May has been helpful in retaining the moisture level of the site. We are hopeful of a very high survival rate.

Our TINY FOREST is designed according to the principles developed by Dr. Akira Miyawaki in the 1970s. Popular in parts of Asia and South America, the approach has taken a while to take hold in Europe. The idea is to get very fast rates of vertical growth and to produce a thick, almost impenetrable grove of trees. This grows into a forest so dense that after a short while sunlight can't reach the ground. At this point, every drop of rain that falls is conserved, and every leaf that falls is converted into humus. Biodiversity is greatly enhanced as the forest thickens and of course, there is the small matter of Carbon Dioxide to think about.

There are several distinct features of a tiny forest that distinguish it from say, a small copse. Planting density is high: 5 trees in an area 1m x 2m. The trees will compete for light and will grow tall. They are not pruned. They are mixed and should be native to the area. The density of the planting will ensure that the understory is very dark. After the first 2 or 3 years, the trees are left to their own devices, to sink or swim, as it were. Along with the competition, comes symbiosis. The relative congestion under the soil will mean mycorrhizal connections (plant roots/fungi) will establish quickly. The benefits to trees in terms of pooling of nutrients and mutual support against external threats have been well documented (see most recently, *Entangled Life* by Merlin Sheldrake) popularly go under the descriptor “The Woodwide Web”.



The Tiny Forest was planted in the NE corner of the North Field. It comprises 580 trees made up of 17 native species, and has been mulched with cardboard overlaid with hay and bark chippings. It has an experimental line of “Sahel stones” to further aid water retention. Rainwater is being collected very close by, to help in case of drought.



<i>SPECIES</i>	<i>NUMBER</i>	<i>SPECIES</i>	<i>NUMBER</i>
HAZEL	11	SILVER BIRCH	31
BIRD CHERRY	20	DOGWOOD	33
FIELD MAPLE	25	ALDER	37
GREY WILLOW	25	DOWNY BIRCH	39
BEECH	26	OAK	40
HORNBEAM	26	WILD CHERRY	43
HAWTHORN	29	GOAT WILLOW	55
CRAB APPLE	29	ROWAN	80
DOG ROSE	31	TOTAL	580



What might the Tiny Forest achieve in terms of CO₂? It is too early to say, obviously, but the growth rates of trees in tiny forests are usually more dramatic than those of commercial forests. Estimates of what our trees might achieve in terms of CO₂ are hard to quantify, but we will be monitoring average annual growth. Our starting point is just below the height of a spiral guard (500mm). We will be looking into a simple rule of thumb for what a tree of say, one metre height, might be absorbing each year.



Bird Surveys

A birdwatch took place in January to coincide with the RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch. Since then, surveys have taken place on the first Saturday of each month with generally two volunteers for each field. The May watch was an early morning Dawn Chorus starting at 04:45. A total of 34 species have been seen in or over the fields.

Most species inhabit the trees, scrub and hedges, but observations have shown some birds feeding off cow parsley.



Habitat Surveys

A winter hedgerow tree survey was completed across the whole site by a large group of volunteers, including DoE pupils, using only the bare twigs and fallen leaves to identify species. These have been plotted and a summer survey will be used to ratify the winter findings. On a weekend at the turn of April into May, a dozen volunteers took part in the international City Nature Challenge using the iNaturalist app. The group made 228 observations identifying approximately 90 species of plant, birds, insects and other invertebrates and fungi.

A Phase 1 Habitat Survey has been progressing for each field. A Phase 1 habitat survey is the first, top level, high pass botanical survey, developed by Prof David Goode at Nature Conservancy Council, to enable a quick assessment of the type of habitat such as woodland, grassland present etc. over large areas of countryside and then categorize these habitats further by plant species present. The findings are being mapped. More details on the habitat have been emerging during the flowering season. Some field slopes reveal botanic interest and diversity. The observations have been used to inform discussions on management plans.



Communications

From the start we realised, with lockdown, it would be essential to use digital media effectively. Thanks to our volunteers working “behind the scenes”, we have a professionally designed **website**, providing space for survey information, news and photo galleries. Volunteers also ensure we have an active **Facebook** page and an **Instagram** account. A monthly bulletin is distributed to over 130 people via **Mailchimp**. We have become a regular (good) news item in **Bath Voice** and have been featured on **Bath Radio**.



Communications in the fields is also important. A small group were responsible for the innovative design of digitally-produced maps, and the information board sited close to the Greenway Lane entrance.

3. Finances for the Year Ending 31 May 2021

Financial Objectives

In the company's first year, our financial objectives were as follows:

- i. To limit the recurring annual operational expenses to being within the sum which had been committed for this year by the subscribing Members, set initially at a maximum total of £1,600.
- ii. To fund additional opportunities for enhancements and other investments from grants to be sought from Bathscape and other bodies. (A secondary objective of these investments was to reduce recurring annual operational expenses in future years).
- iii. To ensure that total income was greater than total expenditure, but (consistent with being a not-for-profit company) to ensure that any surplus be re-invested in pursuit of the vision, mission and objectives of the company.

Summary of Financial Results

The Accounts of the CIC for this first year are presented in the Appendix to this report. This comprises an Income and Expenditure Account in Table 1 of the Appendix and a Balance Sheet in Table 2 of the Appendix. The Accounts have been subject to an independent examination by Mary Young of Widcombe Association, as noted by her signature on the second page of the Appendix. We have included a number of clarifying notes on the third page of the Appendix, principally for the benefit of our subscribing Members, and others attending the AGM.

The financial objectives (i) to (iii) above have been achieved as can be seen from the Tables 1 and 2 of the Appendix, and as follows:

- Our funding from the subscribing Members has totalled £1,105. This equates to a saving of £495 (31%) compared with the pre-committed total.
- Grants and donations from Bathscape and other sources have exceeded all expectations at £4,760. This is 81% of the company's total income of £5,865. (These figures exclude a further £220 of grant income which has been donated but not yet spent, see note (h) of the Appendix).
- Total income has exceeded total expenditure by £47, or £39 after payment of £8 of Corporation Tax, consistent with objective (iii) above.
- £3,354 (72%) of the grant income has been invested in tools and equipment. This includes a scythe mower and a secure steel shed in which it will be stored. These and other items such as a battery-powered strimmer will produce savings in hire costs, contractors' costs and fuel costs in future years, consistent with objective (ii) above.
- Two other major grant-funded enhancements include £1,405 for the high-quality information board sited at the South Gate in Greenway Lane, and the maps posted at each of the three entrances to the Fields; and £504 for stone to transform the condition of two of the three designated footpaths through the Fields.

- The key to achieving this level of grant income has been that FLHF has been able to more than match it through the input of volunteers' time input as outlined in section 2 above.

4. Appointment of Anita Breeze as a Director of the CIC

The subscribing Members will recall that the CIC was initially established with three Directors but that this was reduced to just two when Alan Langton resigned in October 2020 because of his house move to Derbyshire.

Clause 22.2 of the CIC's Articles of Association states that "Any person who is willing to act as a Director, and is permitted by law to do so, may be appointed to be a Director by a decision of the Directors". On Tuesday 15 June 2021 the Directors invited Anita Breeze to become a Director of the CIC and we are very pleased that she has confirmed her willingness to do so.

Anita has been a member of the management team of the CIC since late October 2020, organising and attending the weekly management meetings by Zoom, and making a major contribution through her coordination of volunteer inputs and through her internal and external communications activities.

The subscribing Members are asked to **note** this appointment.

5. Outline Plans for the Year Ending 31 May 2022

We are now entering a busy period of work and we will be inviting both present and additional volunteers to commit to the following tasks, all of which have been agreed in principle with B&NES:

- A. Mowing and subsequent raking of around five acres of the best grassland, the mowing to be undertaken using our scythe mower.
- B. Assembling the steel shed for the secure storage of the scythe mower and other tools and equipment when this is delivered in late August.
- C. Laying more than 18 tonnes of stone on those parts of the designated footpaths between the North Gate and the Copse that have not already been so treated. (Around 160 metres of this path will require wooden decking boards to be installed vertically to retain stone on the downhill side of the path, because of the lateral gradient on these sections of path. Bathscape has expressed a willingness to provide a grant to purchase the required materials and to hire plant in order to assist with the movement of the stone).
- D. Planting of a further 800 saplings in a second Tiny Forest close to the West gate, and to form a hedge along the fence that forms part of the boundary with Beechen Cliff school.
- E. Dismantling and removal of the redundant horse shelter in the East Field, if this continues to be a focus for anti-social activity in late evenings by teenagers.

6. Draft Budget for the Year Ending 31 May 2022

Based on the financial analysis summarised in section 3 above, and with the assumption that as in 2020/21, all major investment and enhancements will be funded by grants and donations from Bathscape and other sources, we have constructed a draft budget for our underlying operations costs in the year ending 31 May 2022 as shown in the table below. We propose to use this budget as the basis of bilateral discussions with each of the subscribing Members separately in the coming weeks. As in the past year, it will be the Directors' objective to manage within a smaller total sum. For comparison it can be seen in Table 1 of the Appendix that the actual Residents' Associations' contribution in 2019/20 was a total of £1,105, the previously committed maximum having been a total of £1,600.

Table - Outline Operations Budget for the Year Ending 31 May 2022

Expenditure	2021/22
Companies House Fees	£28
Insurance	£150
Website	£50
Materials	£200
Fuel	£80
Servicing and Repairs	£150
Contingency	£142
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£800

The subscribing Members are asked to **note** and **comment on** this Annual Report.

APPENDIX

Friends of Lyncombe Hill Fields Community Interest Company (FLHF)

Accounts for the Period 21 May 2020 to 31 May 2021

TABLE 1

Income and Expenditure Account

Income

Residents' Associations Donations:

Greenway!	£75	
Greenway Lane Social Committee	£550	
Widcombe Association	£300	
Bear Flat Association	£180	
Subtotal		£1,105

Other Grants and Donations:

B&NES (Bathscape)	£4,505	
Bath in Bloom	£128	
Individual Donations	£127	
Subtotal		£4,760

Total Income **£5,865**

Expenditure

Company Registration Fee etc	£40	
Insurance	£143	
Website	£75	
Materials	£752	
Fuel	£49	
Maps and Signs	£1,405	
Tools and Equipment	£3,354	
Total Expenditure		£5,818

Excess Income over Expenditure before Taxation **£47**

Corporation Tax Due **£8**

Excess Income over Expenditure **£39**

TABLE 2

Balance Sheet as at 31 May 2021

Current Assets

Cash at Bank	£280	
Debtors	£5	
Subtotal		£285

Liabilities:

Creditors		£241
------------------	--	-------------

Total Net Assets

£44

Represented by:

Share Capital	£5	
Excess Income Over Expenditure	£39	
Carried Forward		£44

Independent Examiner's Statement

I have examined the accounting records and confirm that the accounts are in accordance with those records.

M. E. Young
.....
MARY YOUNG

Date 22 June 2021
.....

Friends of Lyncombe Hill Fields Community Interest Company (FLHF)

Notes to the Accounts for the Period 21 May 2020 to 31 May 2021

- a) Purchases of Tools and Equipment are accounted for on a renewals basis.
- b) The Fields are operated under Licence from Bath & North East Somerset Council (B&NES). There were no initial costs for which FLHF was liable relating to the arrangement of this Licence, and no rent is payable.
- c) There has been no remuneration of any kind for the Directors.
- d) Insurance cover in this period has comprised £5 million of Employers' Liability Insurance, £5 million of Public Liability and Event Cover Insurance, and £500,000 of Professional Indemnity insurance.
- e) The major grants received from B&NES (Bathscape) and Bath in Bloom comprise sums for specific projects or equipment. The £127 of individual donations comprise sums received from two people, £27 of which relates to the cost of the Company Registration Fee.
- f) Donations in Kind (such as saplings or small hand tools) have not been included in these Accounts.
- g) The £5 of Debtors comprises the total of the £1 shares which are to be subscribed by the five Members in the near future.
- h) The principal item of Creditors comprises £220 of grant income unspent. This is required for the installation and security-enhancing costs of the steel shed in which tools and equipment will be stored. The shed has been ordered and paid for as included in these Accounts. This has been funded by a grant from B&NES (Bathscape). £220 of that grant has been excluded from the income in these Accounts but will be included with the associated expenditure in the Accounts for the year ending 31 May 2022. The remaining £21 of Creditors comprises the £13 fee for the annual Companies House submission (this should have been paid on or before 20 May 2021 but was actually paid on 9 June 2021), and £8 for the Corporation Tax due.