

# **Friends of Lyncombe Hill Fields Community Interest Company**

## **Directors' Annual Report for the Year Ending 31 May 2022**



Mowing and raking the Inner Field, May 2022.

### **Photo credits:**

Alison Barrett, Anita Breeze, Chris Kinchin-Smith, Peter McSweeney, Jackie Terrett

## **Introduction**

**The Friends of Lyncombe Hill Fields CIC (FLHF)** was incorporated 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.

This report, prepared by the Directors for the second Annual General Meeting, has the following sections:

- 1. Vision, Mission and Objectives**
- 2. Inputs and Outputs for the Year Ending 31 May 2022**
- 3. An Environmental Snap Shot**
- 4. Events**
- 5. Outline Plans for the Year Ending 31 May 2023**
- 6. Financial Report for the Year Ending 31 May 2022**
- 7. Budget for the Year Ending 31 May 2023**



Cuckoo flower East Field April 2022



Peacock butterfly April 2022

## **1. Vision, Mission and Objectives**

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

Specific objectives for the calendar year 2022 are summarised in the Management Plan that was agreed with B&NES on 7 April 2022. Many of these objectives have already been largely completed but others are ongoing.

## **2. Inputs and Outputs for the Year Ending 31 May 2022**

### **The Volunteer Teams**

All visible tasks in the Fields are undertaken by the Maintenance team, as outlined below.

In addition, many hours of unseen work are undertaken by other volunteer teams. These comprise:

**Flora and Fauna:** This small team organises the Bird and Habitat surveys described further below, and provides expert guidance to the Directors and Maintenance teams.

**Website:** Our website is now administered by new volunteer Website Manager, Peter Cooling, who joined us this year. This has led to a whole series of improvements to the content and functionality of the website.

**Photos:** A Photos team was formed and has taken on the task of selecting the very best photos each month, for our much improved Website Gallery.

**History:** This year saw a detailed investigation into the history of the former Lyncombe Hill Farm, and of its owners and tenants. This produced both new Website content, and a presentation to Widcombe Association members and to our own volunteers in November 2021.

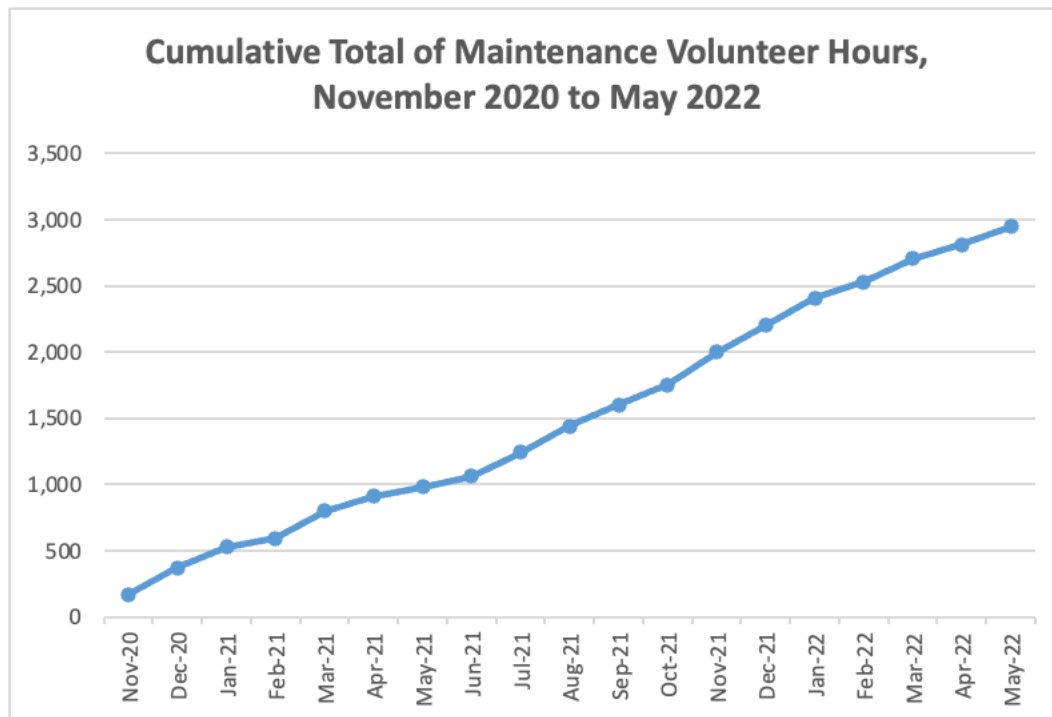
**Maps and Signs:** This team has been developing the specification for a second generation of ‘Welcome’ maps to be posted at each of the entrances to the Fields.

**Planning, budgeting, direction and communication:** These activities are undertaken principally by the three Directors, in addition to their roles as Site Leaders for the maintenance work.

**Maintenance** Our growing pool of volunteers is principally focused on maintenance tasks. Between 1 June 2021 and 31 May 2022, they contributed a total of 1,963 hours to these tasks. This amounts to a monthly average of 163 hours over the 12-month period.

This compares to 983 hours in the previous 8-month period October 2020 to May 2021, a monthly average of 122 hours.

Thus, the total input since October 2020 is just short of 3,000 hours. The rolling annual total is approaching 2,000 hours, on a rising trend. We see this as a strong sign of the commitment of our volunteers and the potential longevity of the legacy of this work.



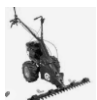
### ***What did these maintenance volunteers do?***



Shifted another 6 tonnes of 20mm stone to consolidate the designated footpaths along with 2 tonnes of 40mm stone to provide a base for the new equipment shed.



Cleared and dug over 80 sq. metres of scrub for Tiny Forest 2 along with a 1.5m x 75m double hedge along the boundary with Beechen Cliff School.



**Mowing and raking** The scythe mower was used to cut 4 acres of the meadows (twice in 2021 and once in 2022). The first cut in each field was extremely challenging as the vegetation had reached 1.5m in some places. The second cut was considerably easier and took considerably less time. The steep sections of the East Field were cut with a strimmer during the autumn of 2021. We started the principal summer cut earlier in 2022: 8 May compared to 27 June in 2021.





**Hand raking is very hard work!** Last year we raked up all the arising vegetation and stacked it up on the edges of the fields. This year, we are using a more limited number of dump sites to improve the composting of this cut material.



Hand-pruned and weeded 300m of neglected hedging between the South Field and the Inner Field not undertaken last year.



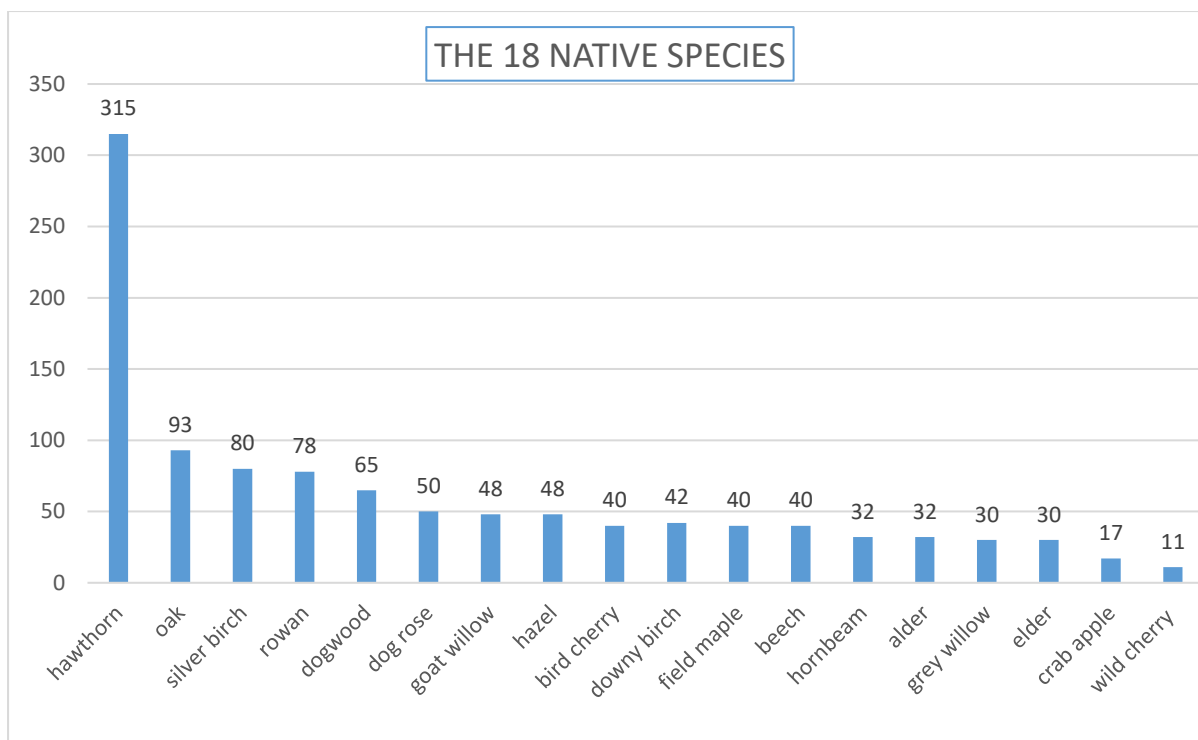
The tall, overgrown hedge along the steps of “**Jacobs Ladder**” was “**pleached**” (a traditional cutting/training method using a *billhook*) by a small team led by Peter McSweeney in February 2022.



April 2022 and the pleached hedge is flourishing.



Planted a total of 1,191 native saplings of 18 different species split between Tiny Forest 2 (240) with the remainder in the hedges along the boundary with Beechen Cliff School and to the north of the Copse.



**Tiny Forest 2** (located in the West Field near the Beechen Cliff School gate) was prepared and planted between November and December 2021. It was planted with 240 saplings comprising a mixture of 15 species: oak, hawthorn, rowan, silver birch, dog rose, dogwood, grey willow, goat willow, hazel, downy birch, field maple, beech, hornbeam, alder and wild cherry. Mulching took place in January and April 2022.



**The horse shelter** in the East Field was dismantled in January 2022, following a number of anti-social incidents and as agreed with B&NES. The site was cleared of rubbish and most of the timber structure was retained for re-use. A lean-to store was erected next to the new tool shed to house the reclaimed timber. ♻️

## Our new (very) young volunteers



**250 cowslip plugs** were planted by 60 year 1 and 60 year 4 children from **Widcombe Infants and Junior Schools** in November 2021 on sites in the Inner Field, West Field and North Field.



**300 bluebell bulbs** were planted in the Copse by 60 year 3 children from **Widcombe Junior School** in March 2022



**300 snowdrop bulbs** were planted along the newly planted hedge by the Beechen Cliff School fence by 60 year 2 children from **Widcombe Infants** in March 2022

## Other maintenance volunteers have included

- **BMT Cyber Security** who collectively spent 40 hours on preparing TF2.
- **Rake Up and Grow** who have helped on 3 occasions helping on TF2, preparing the hedge in the Inner Field and clearing brambles on the East Field.
- **Good Gym** who have helped us on 3 occasions



**Management practicalities.** This year have reviewed how we operate when working on the fields. The **Site Leader** (at present, one of the Directors) takes overall responsibility whilst **Task Leaders** manage individual tasks. We see this as essential for safe and effective operations and the development of volunteers as part of a long term succession strategy.



**Management Policies.** We have continued to develop our **Health and Safety, Risk Assessment, Equal Opportunities** and **Safeguarding** policies to reflect the work of FLHF. All can be found on our website and are subject to annual review.



**Communications.** The **website** pages were substantially updated and the Home Page redesigned. There is now a display of photos reflecting the fields each month and green buttons allow ease of navigation to relevant information. We also have a new *Donate* link to our page on the Localgiving fundraising platform (see section 7 below). Other sections have been expanded and updated. Our **Facebook** and **Instagram** accounts continue to be administered by volunteers. Our monthly bulletin is now distributed to 180 people via **Mailchimp** and we continue to be a regular feature in **Bathvoice**.



A beautiful morning, January 2022.

### **3. An Environmental Snap Shot**



**Mowing and raking explained.** At its most straightforward what we are trying to do is to improve the quality of our grassland in such a way as to maximise the potential for floral diversity. In effect, we are trying to recreate a “traditional” hay meadow. Without intervention, commercial grasses, dock, bramble and nettle (which like fertile soil) can easily become dominant and crowd out smaller wild plants. By delaying the principal cut to the summer, we allow a wide variety of wild plants to grow and set seed. The “arisings” (what we have cut) are raked up and removed. This will, over time, reduce soil fertility. Traditionally, hay meadows would be grazed in the autumn. This is to keep the surface clear



and allow wildflower seeds to get in contact with the soil. Our alternative is a second, and possibly a third cut, between autumn and early spring.

**Will it work?** Only time will tell. By reducing those larger plants and mowing/raking the grass, spring-flowering plants like cowslip, cuckoo flower, celandine, and primrose have already become more prolific. Last autumn we prepared 3 test strips by removing the grass, turning the soil and planting with seed provided by the National Trust, the most significant of which was Hay (yellow) Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*). This annual, known as “*The Meadow Maker*” is parasitic on grasses. This means it will create a space around itself, ready for other species to move in. Of the three strips one was encouraging, the other two much less so. We will continue to experiment and manage the grassland like this, on the understanding that the transformation of our fields may take at least 10 years.

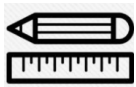


Hay (Yellow) Rattle growing in the North Field, May 2022



**Report on Tiny Forest 1.** TF1 is sited on difficult (steep and weed-ridden) terrain on the North Field and was prepared and planted in a very short time in the winter of 2020-21. The lower part of the site is shady, partly due to its orientation (which we can't change), and partly due to the overhanging branches (which we pruned). In spite of that, the number of saplings lost (18 from 581) was very low (3%). This has been in large part due to the thickness of the cardboard/woodchip mulch, and partly due to a regular weeding regime. The lean-to rainwater collection device, made almost entirely from recycled materials, provides a reservoir of approximately 250 litres of water and has been used on 2 occasions. The Sahel stones proved to be very effective in terms of water retention, as demonstrated by the resulting size of the growing trees and the weeds above this line of stones. In terms of water storage, as Captain Quint might have said in Jaws "It looks like we are gonna need some more barrels!"

**So how's it going?** 18 months on, a few observations. Some species (downy birch, beech and hawthorn) seem more susceptible to drought than others. The trees at the edges of TF1 haven't done as well as the average. Those in the middle are flourishing - they are taller, bushier and more drought resistant. It seems that the forest management techniques developed by Dr Miyawaki 50 years ago work here just as well as in Japan, or Brazil or India or the Philippines or .....



**The progress of TF1 and TF2.** The height of the trees in TF1 was measured in March 2022 and TF2 in May 2022. We have decided to use these data as our baseline for future reports.



Tiny Forest 1: just planted (left), and 18 months later (right)

Guided visitors to the fields are always taken to TF1. They almost invariably assume (incorrectly) that we will be thinning out the trees. We then explain the idea behind tiny forests and the relationships established between fungi and the trees. Inevitably, younger



children seem wholly receptive to the idea of mycorrhizal connections and the idea of the wood-wide web. Kids eh?



**Bird Surveys** A birdwatch took place in January 2022 to coincide with the RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch. There were nearly the same number of birds observed, 101, as last year's 100, but slightly more species 20 compared with 18. Our regular monthly surveys (with the help of David Goode) reveal that the total number of species observed in and over the Fields has risen to 40 since last year's total of 34. Relatively frequent observations of raptors such as buzzard, sparrow hawk, kestrel and occasional pairs of peregrine flying over all suggest a healthy food chain.



"I've seen enough, I'm off! Birdwatchers in East Field, April 2022



**Nest boxes and breeding survey** A small group of observers dedicated many hours watching and recording activity in our nest boxes this spring. Two new boxes with larger openings for great tits were put up in the winter. Five blue tit pairs bred, as did at least one great tit pair; fledglings were observed. Two of the blue tit boxes used in 2021 were not used in 2022 so some boxes may be relocated for 2023 in the hope of improving success. One family of great tits was also spotted nesting in a natural hole around the Copse. There was no activity in the large kestrel box, but this is not surprising in its first year.



**All kinds of bats** A guided walk using bat detectors, led by Bathscape, was conducted in May. Pipistrelles (as small as a thumb) and Noctules were identified. It was decided to obtain 2 bat detectors. These were then purchased by Bathscape and have been donated to us. Two more bat boxes were constructed and erected



**Habitat Surveys** As our volunteers have become more familiar with the site, they have made many observations recorded on iNaturalist. In July 2021 Avon Wildlife Trust conducted a grassland survey.



**Ash dieback** Observations prompted us to carry out a survey of the ash trees on site in July 2021. Some degree of Ash Dieback was observed on 29 of 41 trees surveyed. The report was sent to B&NES who retain responsibility for the larger trees.

#### 4. Events that took place this year



A half day **scything event on the South Field**, led by one of the local National Trust Rangers was attended by 10 volunteers on 31 July 2021.



A guided tour of the fields was given as part of the **Bath Climate and Bio-diversity Festival** on 1 September 2021. Bath MP, **Wera Hobhouse**, along with our 2 local councillors, **Alison Born** and **Winston Duguid**, were given a conducted tour in April 2022.



**The harvest festival** (for all our volunteers, their families and our key stakeholders) was held in the Inner Field on 11 September 2021, to celebrate the end of the main summer mowing period and to thank everyone for their continuing support. There was a bring-and-share lunch with free bar. Musical entertainment was provided by local singer/songwriter Patrick Rowe.



We were a participant in the **Bath in Bloom 'In Your Neighbourhood'** July 2021 initiative. In this annual, inclusive, non-competitive scheme for community projects we were awarded a certificate recording the level we had achieved as 'Advancing.'



## **5. Outline Plans for the Year Ending 31 May 2023**

In addition to our ongoing maintenance routines throughout the year, we will be inviting both present and additional volunteers to commit to the following tasks.



**Tiny Forest 3 (TF3).** This will be a 600 mixed native sapling forest (240 sq m), in the East Field, downhill from **Tiny Forest 1**. Thanks to B&NES for agreeing to this development.



**Sapling Nursery.** A 10m x 5m site will be prepared in the East Field to grow on tree saplings grown from locally sourced seeds and cuttings. We will be collaborating with More Trees for B&NES. At present most of our saplings (which are provided free of charge by various charities) are sourced some distance from Bath. Some even come from Scotland. Other than the obvious issues surrounding long distance deliveries, there is another consideration: what the French call *terroir*. Saplings grown from seeds or cuttings from trees growing within B&NES are bound to be better suited to growing in BA2 than those that have had a 12-hour journey down the motorway. Similar soil, climate, resistance to the same kinds of pests and diseases should give them a head start over those “foreigners”. Thanks to B&NES for agreeing to this development.



Sapling nursery site in East Field covered with hay, May 2022





**Water Collection Devices.** Our plans have secured funding from The Wessex Water Community Fund and Bath in Bloom for the construction and installation of 3 x 800 litre water collection devices to initially serve TF2, TF3 and the sapling nursery. They will be ready to collect rainwater during the winter of 2022/3. Climate change has led to very erratic rainfall patterns, so harvesting winter rain will be essential for the survival of our saplings next spring/summer. These devices are relatively easy to relocate as our needs change.



We will be working to develop our relationship with **Widcombe Infants and Junior Schools**. We will also be expanding our outreach to provide the opportunity for more **corporate volunteers** in the fields.



**Mowing** Time permitting, we will be giving the meadows a winter cut, to replicate some of the effects of allowing stock to graze.

## **6. Finances for the Year Ending 31 May 2022**

### **Financial Objectives**

In the company's second year (2021-22), our financial objectives were as follows:

- i. To significantly reduce the sums required both for operating expenses and for projects, compared with in the financial year 2020-21.
- ii. To maintain a tight balance between income and expenditure in order to avoid ever having a negative cash balance, while also so far as possible avoiding making profits that would be eligible for Corporation Tax.
- iii. To seek to diversify the sources of our funding for 2022-23 and subsequent years away from reliance on the Residents' Associations and Bathscape and towards individual donations, a Charitable Trust and other sources.

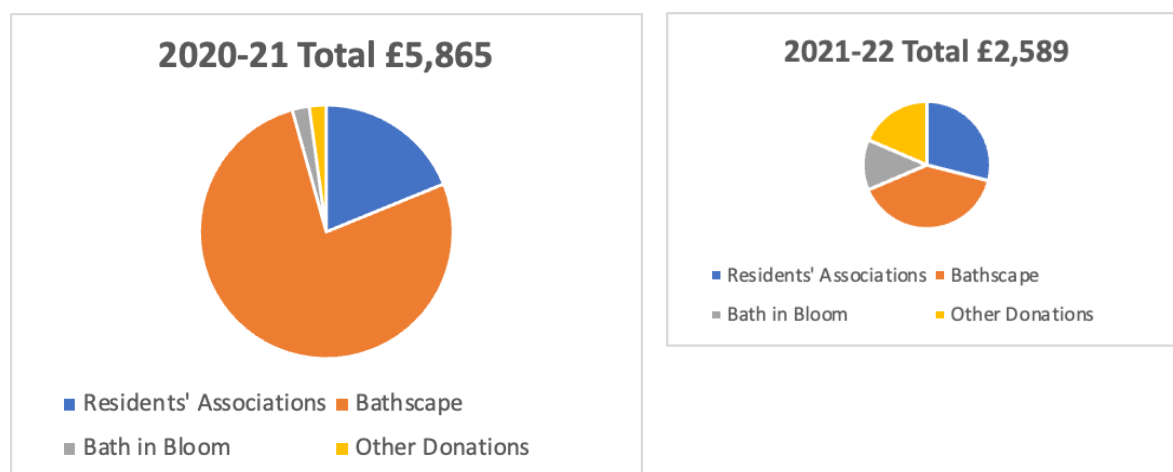
### **Summary of Financial Results**

The Accounts of FLHF for the 2021-22 year are presented in the Appendix to this report, showing also a comparison with 2020-21. This comprises an Income and Expenditure Account in Table 1 of the Appendix and a Balance Sheet in Table 2 of the Appendix. As in 2020-21, 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 (and her initials on the other two pages). We have included a number of clarifying notes on the third page of the Appendix.

The financial objectives (i) and (ii) above have been achieved as can be seen from the Tables 1 and 2 of the Appendix, and as follows. (Objective (iii) is discussed in section 7 below).

- Our funding from the subscribing Members totalled £750, compared with £1,105 in 2020-21 (a reduction of 32%) and a greater reduction compared with the originally committed total for 2020-21 of £1,600.
- Grants and donations from other sources totalled £1,839, compared with £4,760 in 2020-21. This is a reduction of 61%. The largest source was again Bathscape with £1,026. Bath in Bloom donated £333, while £250 came from the Ward Councillors' discretionary fund. The remaining £230 came from individual donations.
- £1,188 was invested in tools and equipment, compared with £3,354 in 2020-21. This is a reduction of 65%. It includes the fitting out of the high-security steel shed in which our equipment is now stored.
- The total of other expenditure was £1,420 compared with £2,464 in 2020-21. This is a reduction of 42%.
- Total Income was £2,589 and total expenditure was £2,608. The excess of expenditure over income produced a very small loss in the year of £19, compared with the small profit of £47 in 2020-21. No Corporation Tax will be payable as a result of this small loss.

A graphical comparison of the make-up of FLHF income in the year ending 31 May 2021 and the year ending 31 May 2022 is shown below.



**Graphical Comparison of Income Sources, Years Ending 31 May 2021 and 31 May 2022**

## 7. Budget for the Year Ending 31 May 2023

Our budget for 2022-23 (see the table below) shows around 16% increase in the overall levels of both income and expenditure compared with 2021-22, reflecting inflation and other factors, and also containing some significant changes in the composition of both income and expenditure. These changes include:

- The committed award of a £500 grant from the Raby Family Trust, to fund operating expenses. (This is expected to be repeated as an index-linked sum in future years).
- The decision to invest £96 per year in membership of the Localgiving membership network and online fundraising platform (see note (g) of the Appendix). This is forecast to produce net income to FLHF from individual donations and direct debits (including associated Gift Aid payments) of £1,000 in this year. £850 of this total has already been committed by donors.
- Consequential reductions in the need for funding by the subscribing Members, the figures shown in this table being subject to review in January 2023.
- The specific award of a grant of £636 from Wessex Water (now agreed) for the construction of rainwater harvesting equipment for our Tiny Forests and for the sapling nursery, as described in section 5 above.

**FLHF Budget for the Year Ending 31 May 2023 (showing comparison with the Prior Year)**

	<b>2022/23 Budget</b>	<b>2021/22 Actual</b>
<b>INCOME</b>		
<b>Income from Shareholders</b>		
Greenway!	£10	£35
Greenway Lane Social Committee	£350	£350
Widcombe Association	£20	£165
Bear Flat Association	£20	£200
<b>SubTotal</b>	<b>£400</b>	<b>£750</b>
<b>Grants and Donations</b>		
Raby Family Trust	£500	£0
Individual Donations	£1,000	£230
Wessex Water	£636	£0
Other Grants and Donations (Bathscape etc.)	£500	£1,609
<b>SubTotal</b>	<b>£2,636</b>	<b>£1,839</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>£3,036</b>	<b>£2,589</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
<b>Operating Costs</b>		
Company Registration Fees	£28	£28
Insurance	£182	£182
Administration Costs	£150	£145
Materials	£50	£118
Fuel	£180	£148
Servicing of Equipment	£120	£0
Maps and Signs	£60	£30
Volunteer Event	£150	£118
Bird Food	£100	£0
Contingency	£140	£0
<b>SubTotal</b>	<b>£1,160</b>	<b>£769</b>
<b>Projects</b>		
Tools and Equipment	£400	£1,188
Plants and Seeds	£400	£400
Stone for Paths	£220	£190
Rainwater Harvesting	£636	£61
Other Projects	£200	£0
<b>SubTotal</b>	<b>£1,856</b>	<b>£1,839</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£3,016</b>	<b>£2,608</b>
<b>EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE BEFORE TAXATION</b>	<b>£20</b>	<b>-£19</b>

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 1 June 2021 to 31 May 2022  
(Showing Comparison with the Period 21 May 2020 to 31 May 2021)

TABLE 1

#### Income and Expenditure Account

<u>Income</u>	2021/22	2020/21
<b>Residents' Associations Donations:</b>		
Greenway!	£35	£75
Greenway Lane Social Committee	£350	£550
Widcombe Association	£165	£300
Bear Flat Association	£200	£180
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>£750</b>	<b>£1,105</b>
<b>Other Grants and Donations:</b>		
B&NES (Bathscape)	£1,026	£4,505
Bath in Bloom	£333	£128
Ward Councillors' Fund	£250	£0
Individual Donations	£230	£127
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>£1,839</b>	<b>£4,760</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£2,589</b>	<b>£5,865</b>
<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>		
Company Registration Fees	£28	£40
Insurance	£182	£143
Administration Costs	£145	£75
Materials	£369	£752
Plants and Seeds	£400	£0
Fuel	£148	£49
Maps and Signs	£30	£1,405
Tools and Equipment	£1,188	£3,354
Other	£118	£0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£2,608</b>	<b>£5,818</b>
<b>Excess Income over Expenditure before Taxation</b>	<b>-£19</b>	<b>£47</b>
<b>Corporation Tax Due</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£8</b>
<b>Excess Income over Expenditure</b>	<b>-£19</b>	<b>£39</b>

20 August 2022

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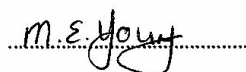
**TABLE 2**

**Balance Sheet as at 31 May 2022 (Showing Comparison with 31 May 2021)**

	31 May 2022	31 May 2021
<b><u>Current Assets</u></b>		
Cash at Bank	£533	£280
Debtors	£0	£5
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>£533</b>	<b>£285</b>
<b><u>Liabilities:</u></b>		
<b>Creditors</b>	<b>£508</b>	<b>£241</b>
<b><u>Total Net Assets</u></b>	<b>£25</b>	<b>£44</b>
<b><u>Represented by:</u></b>		
Share Capital	£5	£5
Brought Forward	£39	£0
Excess Income Over Expenditure	-£19	£39
<b>Carried Forward</b>	<b>£20</b>	<b>£39</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£25</b>	<b>£44</b>

**Independent Examiner's Statement**

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

  
MARY YOUNG

Date 21 August 2022

## Friends of Lyncombe Hill Fields Community Interest Company (FLHF)

### Notes to the Accounts for the Period 1 June 2021 to 31 May 2022

- a) The Fields are operated under Licence from Bath & North East Somerset Council (B&NES). There have been no costs for which FLHF is liable to B&NES relating to the arrangement or operation of this Licence, and no rent is payable.
- b) There has been no remuneration of any kind for the Directors.
- c) A total of £1,609 of grants received from B&NES (Bathscape), Bath in Bloom and the Ward Councillors' Discretionary Fund comprise sums for specific projects or equipment. The £230 of individual donations comprise sums received from three people.
- d) Donations in Kind (such as saplings or small hand tools) have not been included in these Accounts.
- e) Purchases of Tools and Equipment are accounted for on a renewals basis.
- f) 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.
- g) The £145 of Administration Costs relates to £49 of website-related costs, and £96 for a first annual membership subscription to the Localgiving membership network. Localgiving, established in 2008, is the only online fundraising platform that allows unregulated charities and community groups to benefit from Gift Aid. The donation process is described at <https://localgiving.org/donations/>.
- h) The £118 of 'Other' expenditure relates specifically to the cost of the volunteer event held in September 2021 to celebrate the end of the principal summer mowing period, and to thank the volunteers for all of their various inputs. (Three individual donors have provided the funds to pay for the costs of the next such event, to be held in September 2022).
- i) The principal item of the £508 of Creditors comprises a £500 grant from the Raby Family Trust. This was received into the FLHF bank account on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2022 but has been awarded for the specific purpose of providing funds for FLHF operating expenses (i.e. not projects) in the financial year commencing 1 June 2022. The remaining £8 of Creditors is a provision for payment of Corporation Tax due in the year ending 31 May 2021 which to date HMRC has not required to be paid.

20 August 2022

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