

Veterans Outdoors (Formerly the Veterans Farmable Foundation) Impact Report to the Nineveh Charitable Trust

Report on the grant received of £2,000 to support veterans on 6 month programmes in 2020-21 (core funding awarded):

We are Veterans Outdoors charity number 1175204 formerly known as The Veterans Farmable Foundation when we applied. We changed the name in November 2021 to reflect the charities activities more appropriately. You generously awarded a grant of £2,000 which was received on X

This donation contributed to our work in the financial year Nov 2020 to October 2021. Our services are ongoing and developing ensuring we meet the needs of Veterans.

We requested £4K and received £2K. We had a reduced overall budget in 20-21 compared to planned budget due to the impacts on delivery from Covid-19 and need for re-budgeting. We in fact secured funds above the budget which meant we could start this financial year with sufficient cash-flow. We also anticipated that the funding climate may become more challenging which is panning out as expected. This year we still need to seek about meeting income targets.

Very successful. Your donation towards our core activities in 2021 helped to support the mental and physical health and well-being of 88 beneficiaries of which 78 were veterans through therapeutic programmes and activities delivered outdoors and in the countryside in spite of the effects of Covid-19 which has had an impact on levels of anxiety and a reluctance to engage – also due to the impact of lockdowns. Veterans were educated and experienced horticulture – a 10-week course and weekly ongoing free open space, woodland skills, chainsaw qualifications (x4), animal husbandry, bee keeping, weaving/basket/spoon making, relaxing and educational walks across Dartmoor amongst others and through these they have gained a better understanding of nature and the countryside. We provide onsite and wrap around welfare support and mentoring with all our activities.

We supported:

- 88 in total beneficiaries over the year of which 78 were military veterans and 10 spouses or emergency service veterans.
- 21 veterans received support over 6 months+. 57% were male and 43% female.
- Around 9 of these veterans received intensive support and attended weekly activities. They depended on stable support especially during these difficult times.
- X wth disabilities etc

We delivered a range of programmes and activities over 2020-21. Our veterans participated in regular/ weekly programmes and experience days, whilst receiving ongoing welfare support both 1-1s face to face or by phone and also group talk and support groups. Some of these are detailed below to show the different activities and support our veterans received.

The 21 veterans receiving longer terms support had a variety of backgrounds, issues and needs which also stem back to pre-military service and include: Anxiety and stress, depression, autism, schizophrenia, loneliness and social isolation, social anxieties, physical abuse and trauma, military PTSD and CPTSD, low self-esteem and confidence, suicidal ideation amongst others and wide ranging physical issues including an amputee. Some of these veterans receive other specialist support through NHS (TILS), project Nova, GPs and other services.

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Every veteran is different and some require different levels and lengths of support. The impacts on some having been with us for several months has been substantial.

Unfortunately, some of our veterans experienced a decline in health due to external factors, such as a cancer diagnosis, financial and mental health pressures due to Covid, and family issues and all these had an impact on their overall well-being and their outcomes.

Impact and outcomes:

We measured a number of key well-being indicators over a 6 month period. Scale is 1-10, therefore 1 point increase is 10%

- There was an average of 36% improvement in overall mental health and well-being. metrics measured are feeling healthier and more active, looking after themselves better, sleeping better, thinking more clearly, feeling better about themselves, have more energy, less reliant on drugs/substances, less worries about finances/housing, optimistic about the future.
 - One veterans reported 80% improvement in dealing with her problems, 50% feeling physically healthier, 50% eating better and 50% thinking more clearly.
 - Two veterans reported a 60% and 70% reduction on reliance on drugs or alcohol and one of these also reported a 60% improvement in her energy, 40% better at dealing with problems and thinking clearly.
- A 27% increase in learning new skills and one veteran reported a 90% increase and another 50%.
- 30% improvement in confidence overall and one veteran reported a 5 point - 50% increase.
- 30% average increase in veterans feeling more social and able to mix with others.
- Overall there was a 20% increase in giving to others and supporting the community

Weekly/Regular supported therapeutic activities:

We have developed four regular therapeutic programmes over 20-21 including two regular horticultural growing and gardening programmes, a regular programme of outdoor therapeutic nature based activities and equine therapy.

We deliver a programme of weekly, open-to-everyone, sessions currently held every Wednesday in the walled garden at Pentillie Castle near Saltash in Cornwall. Beneficiaries have helped to restore some of the walled garden at the castle which was completely overgrown. We worked with a horticulturist to develop a plan of activities and who is on site to support veterans along with a mentor.



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We also deliver 'taster'/experience days on site and veterans can come as often as they wish and some come every week. Our veterans have learned a lot about horticulture, developed allotment style growing plots,

built fruit cages, grown their own seedlings and drunk an awful lot of tea whilst meeting their friends in a safe, peaceful space.



Working with the Apricot Centre, a local organic farm and woodland delivering well-being and therapeutic support to children, families and adults with mental health and physical issues. Led by a qualified Nature and Well-being practitioner alongside a Veteran's well-being mentor. Bi-weekly sessions include mindfulness exercises and outdoor crafts and practical volunteering activities and projects on site giving back to the community and learning new skills.

Photos are from a session where one group went off to help rebuild the shed, replace the roof and prepare it for painting (next time we are onsite). Meanwhile, a couple of our other beneficiaries have been building a gate to hang on the privacy screen that goes around the social area of the site. Including lunch around the fire.



Course in Horticultural therapy:

We worked in partnership with the Defence Garden Scheme to deliver a 10 week bespoke client centred horticultural therapeutic course to a group of 10 veterans. As a result two participants have gone on to volunteer in the vegetable garden at Dartington Hall. We'll continue to deliver these into 21-22.



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"I had never thought about growing vegetables in raised beds before – I will now! But more than this, I benefitted physically and mentally from being outdoors in a safe space with other veterans".

"A year ago I was in the house unable or unwilling to go out after a long illness and the threat of Covid. Coming here has given me the opportunity to overcome this. I have and will continue to take new experiences as a result".

Regular volunteering projects and upskilling:

We delivered several community based activities and projects where veterans and other beneficiaries help to develop and regenerate community wildlife spaces and gardens. These took place in Plymouth and Buckfastleigh. Whilst undertaking these veterans learn new skills and knowledge such as forestry/woodland skills, gardening, and knowledge about wildlife. Two of our veterans are going onto paid work with Plymouth City Council whom we work in Partnership with.



Training: As well as valuable up upskilling we have delivered a formal training course in Chainsaw training which 2 of our 21 veterans attended.

Experience days:



With expansion of services we have been able to deliver bee-keeping, forestry skills days, raft team-building and kayaking, working with alpacas and organised walks across Dartmoor.

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We've worked with several existing and new providers to deliver these.

"I can't put into words how much you have helped me" and "It's a privilege to be a beneficiary of such a wonderful, caring, charity."



Welfare support

We provided face to face, virtual and phone support sessions individually to beneficiaries, and weekly online talk and support groups. Due to Covid and lockdown we created these regular **'talk and support'** online groups using MS Teams which are still ongoing. We invite along guest speakers and, as our veterans grow in confidence, they are also invited to present to the group.



Mini Case studies and Feedback:

A veteran who has completed 6 months programme:

Initially, very quiet and lacking in confidence, a veteran who was not comfortable in large groups, started building peer support networks with others that he has met during online Talk & Support meetings. He gained the confidence to start attending our group activities. He started to meet up

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with his new friends after lockdowns were lifted, going walking and cycling together, sharing books, DVDs.

"I feel really comfortable and wanted at Farm-Able. They are interested in me and not just because it is their job – they are all genuinely interested in me. Everyone listens to you so that they get a good picture of you and then they can match you to the best activities. I've had real focus lately and the support that I get is fantastic."

General Feedback:

"Wednesday is the highlight of my week, it is the only thing I have to look forward to and that is worth getting out of bed for"

"It was a pleasure to join you all yesterday and I am so glad that I took the leap! I think you are all lovely and kind and understanding which in civilian life is refreshing. I will join your bonkers group every week now. I love it! Especially as you have all taken me under your warm and cosy wings!"
(referring to weekly online talk and support groups)

"I get so much energy from you guys; it is an amazing help and I don't have to give anything"

"You are a super guide who has tremendous energy and knowledge it's a privilege to be a beneficiary of such a wonderful caring community such as Farm-Able. As my previous experience could have put me off organisations and charity's such a fine line between success and failure?! I look forward to other activities it's a great lifeline for me....."

"It's great to work with the other guys on the project and to hear their stories. It's a really great way to relax and to socialise without things being overbearing. I look forward to coming every week"