

The Shallowford Trust Newsletter



Dear Friends,

Humblest apologies, it has been way too long since we have sent out a newsletter! However, the good news is..... we have been busy. Super busy!!

The year began with a group arriving from Bristol in January, daring to challenge Dartmoor at its darkest and possibly its wettest. The result was absolutely wonderful! Twelve ten and eleven year olds who had never been up a steep hill, had never been allowed to jump in mud, had never sniffed a wiffy pig, wielded a broom, walked in the dark to spot stars..... the challenge was on! They took the challenge and ran with it. Absolutely deciding that life on Dartmoor was to be lived to the fullest..... The groaning moans as we trudged up the hill, some heaving, some gasping as their lungs sucked in cool, fresh vitalizing air. 'I am going to do it!I *can* do it!' lungs heave and wheeze, 'No I can't!' eyes well up. A hand reaches down from Ellie, 'Yes you can' and so, gently we wind up the side of the Tor.

But when we reached the top? Dark oozing puddles, rich with peat. One child tipped a wellie toe daringly in the scarily cold, oil like water. Took a breath and then jumped! The rest..... well, if you have ever wondered about the ability to 'lose oneself in the moment', these children were submerged not only in mud, but in the freedom to live, experience, lose their fears, worries and just, simply, enjoy nature at its rawest and most vital.

We have been extremely fortunate and gained support from a donor to fund the residential and transport costs for one hundred children



from five different inner city schools. So far, the schools have all come from Bristol, as our nearest major city. Having said that we are also aware that many children as close as Newton Abbot, Torbay and Plymouth have also never climbed a Tor, collected an egg, scratched the ears of a cow and certainly don't know the difference between an oak or rowan tree. However, we did have one Plymouth Primary School send their entire year over ten days of residential..... Loads of fun and lots of local learning!



However, in addition to residential which have a very profound effect on inner city young people who have never or rarely had encounters with nature, we have been extremely fortunate in gaining a Heritage Lottery, Green Recovery Grant. This enabled us to employ a new, full-time member of staff to work specifically on

Conservation with the advantage of funding to support day trips. Consequently, in the first six months of the year we had 19 Green Recovery Day trip groups and five residential groups. We have increased from hosting 708 visitor days in 2018/19 to 2,332 in the first six months of 2022! However, we believe we can outreach to even more young people.



The Green Recovery Grant, with a few other local donations and massive volunteer support has enabled a fantastic new resource; a large veggie patch and poly tunnel, with sprinklers, raised beds for easy access and sufficient funds to enable the collection, propagation and planting out of the Devil's Bit Scabious Plant. The DBS is the sole food for the caterpillar of the Marsh Fritillary Butterfly, a level red endangered species, that we hope to encourage by working with farmers throughout the Postbridge

area. By planting 'plugs' of the Devils Bit Scabious, we aim to provide sufficient food between the existing small pockets of plants enabling the caterpillars to develop and thrive over the next few years. It is an ambitious plan, but we will do what we can, working with amazingly dedicated locals, volunteers and visiting groups to hack out scrub, tend, plant and carefully manage the grazing of ponies and cows.

Apart from Ellie, joining our team as Conservation officer, we have recruited Nick Creasy as our Programme Development Coordinator and David Onah has switched from volunteer to employee enabling us to extend our youth and engagement programme. As of mid August this year, we also have a new resident volunteer – Arthur, who comes straight from Bicton College to gain farm, conservation and youth experience. With many of the core team in place, we surged ahead with the final phase of construction! But could we complete in time for the auspicious deadline of 3rd May 2022??



Many of you may have visited the Ark, completed in 2020 and the East Barn, converted in 2021. Finally in 2022, we aimed to extend the covered space around the Animal Barns to provide protection against the winter mizzle. We had invited their Royal Highnesses, the Earl and Countess of Wessex to open the new developments, heralding our transition from being able to host only fifteen people to an almighty thirty two! The last few weeks were tense to say the very least. Builders, painters, electricians, plumbers, volunteers sawing, cutting, shoveling, drilling, painting, and just people, bundling over each other to hit the deadline. But they did it!!!



Since the deadline, it's tempting to heave an almighty sigh of relief. However, deadlines and targets still loom!

There are two major problems preventing us reaching our target of increasing numbers from 708 visitor days in 2018-19 to 2,677 by 2023-24. Simply stated: very few schools or youth groups have heard of us and..... we now need funding for more staff and maintenance.

We obviously do not have to explain to anyone about increasing living costs. To simply heat the rooms, keep the lights on, pay for human and animal feed has become ridiculously expensive. We have the maximum number of solar panels allowed on the Animal Barn to supplement our electricity consumption. The

East Barn is designed to utilize ground source heat pumps, but the Govt is not yet subsidizing their instillation, so we are patiently waiting until it is feasible for instillation. We encourage a three minute rule for lights in empty rooms and encourage as little food waste as possible. We have a new Volunteer Coordinator, engaging we hope, a core of dedicated practical locals who are keen to support us for one day a week helping in a huge range of tasks around the farm and buildings. In the mean time, we will continue to fundraise and reach out to new schools and youth groups. If anyone knows of a school or group who you think would like to visit, please send them our details.



A new website is under construction and due to be completed by the autumn. We are ready, we are busy. Let the learning experiences begin!

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