



# Annual General Meeting 2024

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Windmill Hill City Farm Café

18<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Attending: Luke Bardock, Mike Lees, Finbar Cullen, Jane Wadham, Laura Demery, David Demery, Jon Gibson, Sophia Gibson, Bonnie Hewson, John Thompson, Iwona Tempowski, Lal Heaton, Chris Heaton, Stacy Yelland, Toni Hutchison, Christine C, Nick Marshall, Laura Sutherland-Patman, Alia Swann, Georgie Barber, Andrew Swann, Kavina Upadhyay, Hazel Winter, Alix Hughes, Annabelle Craven-Jones, Rachel Cartwright, Anne Sharpe, Jamie Darwen, Sally Jones, Susie Dunham, Claire Jeffwitz, Alice Clarke, Jon Lund, Diz Wales, Gemma Instrall, Liz Warren.

Proxies: Victoria Bending, Avril Baker, Stefan Edwards, Sorrel Randow, Juan Martinez, Heather Dupressoir, Lisanne Pinfield.

Staff: Steve Sayers, Hannah Aspinall, Monse Buitrago

Apologies: Stephen Frost

## **Minutes of 2023 AGM**

The board recommends approval.

**Resolution.** To approve the minutes of the 2023 AGM as a correct record of the meeting.

Approval proposed by Jamie Darwen and seconded by Sally Jones.

## **Presentation of annual report and accounts**

Copies were available in advance of the meeting from our website. The Directors have approved the annual report and accounts. No resolution is required.

## **The Chair of Trustees, Anne Sharp, presented an overview of the year.**

Anne thanked the members for their support. She reported that 2023-2024 has been a challenging year, but that the farm has continued to provide vital services to the local community. The farm's strategy was reset in 2023 with 5 main areas of focus – education, developing wellbeing, community spaces, community leadership, stronger organisation.

There have been ongoing difficulties in staffing the nursery (which are sector wide problems) and reaching full occupancy, yet it still achieved the Bristol Standard this year and gained extremely positive feedback in the parents' survey. The farm runs well subscribed Outdoor Learning and Health and Social Care programmes that are highly valued by the people that use them. The farm is also in communication with the wider community, developers, and local organisations.

The board had some changes over the last year – a few trustees left and four new ones with a wide range of expertise were co-opted. Anne gave thanks to the farm's staff.



**The Chair of the Finance Sub-Group, Jon Lund, presented an overview of the accounts.**

The board has approved the accounts audited by Godfrey Wilson. The charity recorded paper loss of £220,000 last year. The turnover was £2.3 million and there were carry-over funds of £1.4 million, of which £345,000 are unrestricted. The financial year closed with £580,000 reserves. An underlying reason for the loss this year is the external environment; Living Wage pay increases (10% last year), utility bill rises, nursery recruitment challenges affecting occupancy, tricky fundraising climate. So far, the farm has been able to weather this environment due to the reserves it built up during the pandemic, but the current losses are not sustainable.

Jon gave an overview of how the board monitors the farm's finances. The accounts are brought to every board meeting for scrutiny, there are quarterly finance sub-group meetings that monitor the accounts more closely (including deep dives into specific areas), and CEO Steve Sayers brings any new opportunities or ideas for raising funds before the board for scrutiny.

The funding entitlement changes in the nursery have incurred a lot of extra administrative work for the farm, but the changes made do not seem to have affected the farm's income too much.

There is a plan to recover financially, despite tough climate. The plan is linked to the strategy and involves keeping the farms diverse range of activities, maintaining relationships with regular funding partners, minimising overheads, transitioning Hartcliffe City Farm into being more independent, and more focus on individual giving. In the short term the farm will be affected by the new government's budget changes to National Insurance contributions, but the farm will rise to the challenge. Jon thanked Steve and Alia O'Callaghan (Finance Manager) for their hard work.

**Questions and comments from members.**

Will the desired £600,000 headroom figure increase to account for inflation?

There is no headroom to invest in the short term, so WHCF will have to eat into the buffer before building it back up. The forecasting is done prudently and budgets for a small deficit, the forecasting is then monitored month by month. Steve is optimistic that WHCF will break even this year.

Regarding the development in the area are there any opportunities to get funds from section 106 of Community Infrastructure Levy?

Not as much as the organisation would hope, as the amount gets shared between 4 wards which community organisations have to compete for.

Have the new developments on the farm paid off? I.e. the sauna or the theatre

Each area developed has a different approach, the sauna is a flat rental income which is low risk to the farm and brings in more income than the space was making before. The income of the theatre space is based on ticket sales, generally on a profit share basis with individual theatre companies. If more resources were put into the theatre space the reward would be higher, but WHCF is currently taking a lower risk approach so as not to overstretch.

Will the upcoming changes to childcare provision affect WHCF?

Steve gave a brief explanation of how the funding works. Broadly speaking it should be slightly better for the farm financially.

What are the current figures for individual donations?

Currently they are a small stream of income. However, the hope is for the Individual Giving Officer to improve these figures without too much effort through match fund appeals, wills, donations, etc. WHCF currently takes around £25,000 per year on the card donation stand in reception. There is a balance to be kept between raising funds and not appearing to be too pushy.



### **Appointment of auditors**

Godfrey Wilson carried out our audit this year, which audit went well. The directors recommend engaging Godfrey Wilson as our auditors for the coming year.

**Resolution.** To appoint Godfrey Wilson as auditors.

Approval proposed by Gemma Instrall and seconded by Jamie Darwen.

### **Election of Trustees**

Two trustees must retire by rotation at the AGM. This year it is the turn of Alice Clarke and Anne Sharp to stand down. Both wish to be re-elected.

One trustee resigned since the last AGM: Fran Inman (May 2024).

Four trustees have been co-opted in the year and must stand for election: Diz Wales, Gemma Instrall, Liz Warren, and Stephen Frost.

Five trustees are continuing in post: Jamie Darwen, Jonathan Lund, Sally Jones, Claire Jeffwitz, Susie Dunham.

The Board recommends appointment of those standing.

**Resolutions.** To re-appoint Alice Clarke and Anne Sharpe to the board of trustees.

**Resolutions.** To appoint Diz Wales, Gemma Instrall, Liz Warren, and Stephen Frost to the board of trustees.

Approved by a wide show of hands across the room.

### **Close of AGM business**

Steve Sayers, Chief Executive, gave a short talk to update members on the plans at Windmill Hill and Hartcliffe City Farms.

It has been a big year for the Hartcliffe site as a General Manager was appointed in June. The site has been totally transformed, and plans are on track for it to become increasingly more independent.

At Windmill Hill there is an impending installation of a district heat network pipe (by Vattenfall) that will run through the farm along the back fence adjacent to Whitehouse Lane. The District Heat Network (DHN) is an efficient low carbon system for densely populated areas. In return for running the pipe through part of the farm, Vattenfall will be doing some works around site, including relaying the paths make them more accessible, resurfacing areas, replacing gates, and creating a branch from the pipeline for the farm to connect to the DHN in future.

This year the farm commissioned a carbon audit from the Centre for Sustainable Energy. The carbon footprint for the farm is 100 tonnes net CO<sub>2</sub>, which is approximately the same amount of CO<sub>2</sub> that it would take to fly the entire staff team one way from London to New York. Around half of this amount is generated by heating. The farm is heated by 6 gas boilers. The hope is to replace these with lower carbon alternatives – solar, electricity, and DHN.

A new opportunity has arisen this year in the Bedminster Property Partnership. As part of a pilot project from Platform Places, five places in England are being given money to regenerate the area. Bedminster is one of these places and Windmill Hill City Farm has been chosen to be the fiscal host for the project. The project aims to have 3 new community spaces in place in Bedminster in the next three years. It is in its early stages so there are no fixed plans for what this will look like yet.

A question was raised around how the farm will manage the effort that is put into community spaces against the likelihood that these spaces will be taken away. Steve answered that this property



partnership will address the problems with meanwhile spaces and look to moving community spaces out of meanwhile spaces into long term ones.

It was asked whether the farm will definitely be connected to the DHN. Steve answered that an appraisal of farm buildings is underway to work out which ones would be compatible, so the connecting pipes will not be installed until it is clear where they need to go.

A question was raised around what impact the pipe being fitted will have to business continuity. Steve answered that the work is beginning in December and running through to March to minimise impact to growing season, plot holders, and groups that use the garden space. There will also be safeguards in place for what happens if the work goes beyond the March deadline.

Steve gave an overview of WHCF's next Big Give campaign, which will be focussed on raising £15,000 for the supported volunteer programme alongside farm and garden Maintenance. The £15,000 figure is match funded by Dandara, Vattenfall, and the Reed Foundation, so WHCF only needs to raise individual donations up to £7500, and the rest will be match funded. The promotional video for the fundraiser was shown.

A representative from the South Bristol Toy Library gave they're thanks to WHCF for their support – including to Alia O'Callaghan and Zoe Garratt in the Finance team. There were also thanks from the allotment holders. A big thanks went to Montserrat Buitrago, cafe manager, for her excellent work on catering the AGM.

Close of meeting.