

Empowering Futures – Annual Trustees Report

BEFF is registered as a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation). Registered with the Charities Commission Number 1182139 on 19 February 2019. The name was changed to Empowering Futures on 19/12/20.

The bank account name could not be changed due to Covid restrictions/no face to face appointments allowed and Santander bank was not prepared to allow the change to charity status, hence bank charges incurred.

The first Trustees are;

- 1. Sarah Harper**
- 2. Maria Needs**
- 3. Angela Taylor – resigned due to poor health**
- 4. Susan Farthing – appointed 19/1/21**

The board of Trustees will be required to serve for a minimum of one year and those named above served throughout this period.

Aims and Objectives

“To promote social inclusion for the public benefit by preventing people from becoming socially excluded, relieving the needs of those people who are socially excluded and assisting them to integrate into society by providing therapeutic gardening activities and animal care activities.

For the purpose of this clause 'socially excluded' means being excluded from society, or parts of society, as a result of one or more of the following factors: unemployment; financial hardship; youth or old age; ill health (physical or mental); substance abuse or dependency including alcohol and drugs; discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, disability, ethnic origin, religion, belief, creed, sexual orientation or gender reassignment; poor educational or skills attainment; relationship and family breakdown; poor housing (that is housing that does not meet basic habitable standards; crime (either as a victim of crime or as an offender rehabilitating into society).”

Empowering Futures has maintained its objectives in supporting people who are isolated and excluded from Society. Individuals who need support and cannot tackle issues or barriers presented to them alone. Those most vulnerable, disadvantaged and/or disabled are our primary participants.

For the public benefit

Examples of our delivery for the public benefit can be found in the following paragraphs which give specific examples of activity and those supported. Empowering Futures is committed to supporting people who are otherwise

excluded from Society for numerous reasons. Some are deemed too expensive to support, some written off, others because of assumptions made. Invariably beneficiaries have led complex lives, coupled with disability and health issues and nowhere to turn. We believe everyone can achieve, given the right opportunity, encouragement, time and belief. Our successes show we have achieved our aims, both with people and in society. We seek to tackle the root issues so as beneficiaries move forward, they are supported and given a voice and their barriers are overcome.

Mar 20 – April 2021

Covid Variations to service

Covid has dominated/prevented most of the planned services during the year.

Our new base at Westerleigh was established and erected in full by March 2020 only to encounter Covid. Our anticipated services were reduced before we could start them. The farm had chickens, goats and small animals and a wealth of products for use in horticulture activity both onsite and offsite.

The Trustees met and discussed how the charity could assist isolated people during Covid whilst maintaining the site and an income. As working from home grew in popularity, extra voluntary hours became available predominantly from saved travelling to work hours.

To combat Covid restrictions, we started a delivery service for our plants and compost. This allowed us to reach people most isolated and also shielding as a result of their health conditions. We kept in touch with multiple people engaged via social media and with telephone calls. Our media reach grew to over 8000, with many maintaining contact via facebook and receiving newsletters. The feedback from those isolated was overwhelming and full of appreciative comments and thanks for ideas shared and the encouragement they felt.

All deliveries were socially distanced, and we added value to each delivery and maintained contact with people who otherwise would have been totally isolated during the continual restrictions. The team were able to communicate growing tips, provide seeds, planters and encourage people to grow their own. Parents and children experimented and used the opportunity to grow their own products in their gardens. For many, it provided an activity they would otherwise have been prevented from. We received numerous emails of thanks and appreciation and felt we were able to offer our support to help people cope during the pandemic in an innovative unique way.

Specific in year Outcomes

Over 300 shielders, reached through delivery of products and Social media which was a huge, exhausting outcome during the year however, extremely rewarding in maintaining our ethos, that no one should be left behind.

During the year, we welcomed a placement who was able to travel to the site, was unable to secure a placement elsewhere and suffered anxiety whilst completing a City and Guilds in Animal Husbandry to learn and gain skills with the animals, she went on to successfully complete her Level 2 and moved on to the Level 3. Additionally, this helped the charity maintain the daily tasks connected with the animal upkeep as the expected services planned to cover this were put on hold due to Covid. The beneficiary has since moved into full time work.

Beneficiaries attended from Social Care and spent time with the animals, including walking the goats as part of their daily exercise with support workers. Groups were limited to 2 and not as anticipated. However, we were able to keep everyone safe and we adopted a covid safeguarding and well-being, risk assessed policy. This resulted in no cases of the virus amongst beneficiaries and none of the volunteers suffering from Covid.

The gardening club was delivered on a 1:1 basis only in each polytunnel for short periods when restrictions were relaxed and to allow beneficiaries' access to an activity after being cooped up all week. For social care beneficiaries' this became one of their only activities that was safe and accessible. Each client had one support worker only whom they travelled with.

Activities carried out with the Growing Staple Hill project included one volunteer from the staff and one from the community to ensure Covid restrictions were followed, travelling to and from the High Street was completed alone.

The planters, made in the previous year, were filled with the plants and flowers beneficiaries had grown and nurtured earlier in the year. Each of the planters were watered everyday in Staple Hill throughout the hot summer. Unfortunately, we could only include a few volunteers in the project as the pandemic restrictions didn't allow groups to safely work together. We transported hundreds of litres of water every day and the beds grew and provided colourful displays to walkers taking their daily strolls. We did receive feedback via social media on the difference the community could see in the neighbourhood especially as most other High Streets did not fill their planters during the pandemic as many distributors could not meet demands.

Staple Hill became a haven of colour as the weather warmed and more and more people left their homes. Seats on the High Street were gradually taken up more and more which prompted conversation about the planters and we

were lucky enough to see and hear this whilst watering every day. Feedback from a local councillor supported this.

We had employed four beneficiaries whilst at Westerleigh to care for the animals, each on part time contracts. Two were furloughed because of their health and two were able to continue.

The people employed had either never worked before or had not worked for a number of years. One lady with significant anxiety had progressed from not being able to leave the house to attending the farm and had began working for 4 hours a week. Her journey, counting every roundabout she passed, returning home to check the taps were turned off gradually became easier and her anxiety lowered. Her debt issues were addressed as was her week to week budget. She learnt to open her post and not hide away debts until they became unsurmountable. The lady had previously worked in a prominent professional position before taking early retirement on ill health as life issues became too much for her.

Another with learning difficulties had never been offered a job at the tender age of 56. She often talked about being sent to employers who didn't 'want her' because she had learning difficulties. She was unable to read or write and has learnt to write her name now and become a valued staff member. Her conversation has grown from 'yes' and 'no' to having the ability to hold true meaningful conversation, express herself and ask questions.

A permanent base

Finally, we were able to secure a new permanent base in Moorend. The land is being rented to the charity for a peppercorn rent in the first three years, allowing us to have a permanent base where we can grow without fear of yet another move.

We packed down our site and moved to what is now a farm, to establish the care farm. However, despite huge local support, we have faced continual and unanticipated barriers to operating. A huge amount of time has been spent on planning applications as the Local Authority insisted on a change of use being requested to include education. Additionally, erecting animal housing and upkeeping the land/animals has exhausted the voluntary hours we were able to provide. We had not envisaged facing a social injustice ourselves and have taken our case to ministerial level seeking justification. Although care farms are encouraged and included in the Governments 25 Environmental plan, the detail is not. We know we are not alone and have spoken to the national federation of Social Farms and Gardens and other 'starters' who are facing similar issues.

However, although general activities were not permitted by the LA, the Trustees were able to employ farmhand coaches to maintain the farm. New employees joined the team, who had been beneficiaries and were furthest

from the labour market. With support from Government grants we were able to support beneficiaries develop and sustain employment. This allowed our objects to be achieved as we not only supported socially isolated people, we were also able to offer regular contact/communication/motivation using a 'real' job and work setting. Beneficiaries employed included those least likely to gain employment and those who had never held any job during their life. However, as extra people were given the opportunity of employment, within a few weeks/months Covid impacted again and some were furloughed due to the need to shield. Each gradually resumed their part time hours as the restrictions allowed.

They included people who could not read or write, had mental health issues, had significant learning difficulties, were autistic and one person was terminally ill. All were employed for part time hours. Five of the people employed have now moved into permanent employment and pastures new, allowing for others to fill their places. One of the employees, in their 50's, who had never been employed before, is now moving towards supporting others which is a mammoth achievement in less than 18 months. The growth in beneficiaries' has once again exceeded our expectations and their own!

To assist our sustainability, we collected over 500 Christmas trees during January 2021 and dismantled each one by hand, with the help of several volunteers, 15% was completed by the end of the financial year. The goats enjoyed tasty treats and the trunks were used for designated beds and signs. We were able to make our own mulch to aid the growth of saplings planted and compost for use in the horticulture activity.

In January 2021, we commissioned a land management plan and have sought to create a care farm where people can learn and benefit from the outdoor space. Our sensory area is complete with a wildflower meadow and pollards of willow. The benefits of being in green space and outdoors is widely publicised as was the lack of facility for those not able to access green space due to disability, during covid. Our sensory garden will provide a sensory area which will support a reduction in anxiety for beneficiaries attending in the future as well as aid their mental health and well-being allowing the charity to reach and support more people using the land as a tool. Volunteers working the land have noted the tranquil feel already when preparing the area despite the noise from the Motorway traffic. The land management plan will allow sharing of information regarding bio-diversity and climate change which will be educational and enable nature talks. The local school with 5% of pupils with Special Educational Needs have voiced interest in bringing children to site who would specifically benefit from the setting on a regular basis.

The goats have enjoyed stripping the grown willow, ready to use in craft activities. Fencing has been erected to separate the paddocks. Over 500 saplings provided by the Woodland Trust have been planted to boost the

biodiversity and help combat climate change. Social Media has been integral in attracting volunteers to perform specific tasks like the tree planting.

We have a protected badger sett which sits at the base of the site and a local willow crafter donated a willow badger that stands prominently there. We have also employed a willow teacher, who when covid restrictions reduce, and the weather allows, will teach us and beneficiaries willow craft. This will be especially helpful for the beneficiaries expected from Bristol NHS Trust Brain Injury Unit who have requested small group work and one to one for those recovering after various treatments relating to brain injury. Willow is recognised as being a successful therapeutic tool because of the repetitive complexities involved. The staff member is nurturing the willow whilst tackling her own health issues and preparing to create her own business which we are supporting her with. This furthers our aim of enabling and empowering people into independence.

Although we haven't been able to deliver planned services, we have welcomed visitors especially adults and children of disability, who cannot cope in mainstream settings and were pandemic shielders. The visits allowed them to maintain their protected isolation whilst being in a safe outdoor space visiting the animals and exploring the sensory area being developed.

We explored new territory and through innovative ideas were able to lay pathways so people who have mobility issues can navigate and access the farm in wheelchairs.

One visitor commented that she had never got so close to an animal or been able to take her wheelchair on grass for fear of tipping over and had always missed out on school trips because of her mobility. Another that she had only been able to leave her home twice in a year and that the trip would be foremost in her memory for a very long time.

Multiple visitors with disadvantaged children commented on the difference it made to their children. One visitor cried as her 4-year-old son with Downs, mixed with the goats and told us, he rarely got out of the car, when she took him to new places. She was shocked at his behaviour and overwhelmed with his eagerness. For many visitors, it was their first or only trip outside their home during the pandemic. The opportunity to be in green space, safely, at a farm with animals was a lifting experience for everyone that visited. 100% of visitors agreed the visit exceeded their expectations and that they felt at ease, relaxed, comfortable and welcome.

We were able to allow people and children with compromised immune systems to the site as they literally had nowhere else they could go safely, outside of their homes during the pandemic. All visits were prebooked to ensure covid restrictions were adhered to.

Additionally, we received many messages via our website asking about activities available for disabled children who were extremely isolated and most suffering intense anxiety and mental health issues. To meet the demand, Empowering Futures embarked on new training with the intention to be in a position to create a Forestry School for children who could not attend mainstream groups. This would allow disabled children to participate in an outdoor activity where they could cope, and grow in confidence whilst learning new skills.

During the year 1 volunteer passed their Forestry School Level 3 and is now a qualified team leader and able to run a Forestry School. Whilst the charity awaits planning permission to provide welfare facilities, we ran a pilot of Forestry School for a few small groups with sessions of 90 minutes. The sessions were highly successful with parents amazed at the difference in their children and in their willingness to take part and be involved. For our volunteers the reactions, achievements, ideas from the beneficiaries were moving and exceeded expectations. One lad, who had been having significant issues at school became much more able to attend School and showed improved behaviour. His mother said, she felt indebted to the charity and was amazed at his behaviour changes.

Horticulture was one of the biggest activities of 2021 as so much could be completed outdoors safely. Additionally, Corporate volunteers were offered from Aviva who were instrumental in making compost heaps and planting trees. We have managed to make all of our own compost and mulch this year. This not only saves significant amounts of money, it also provides us extra confidence in our sustainability. Recycling and upcycling of pallet wood has continued and outdoor furniture and fences have been constructed.

We have managed to maintain the site, with great difficulty, welcome visitors, and communicate with those isolated throughout the year despite the pandemic which is a fantastic achievement made possible by the Trustees, volunteers and disabled people employed to work on the farm for a few hours a week. Our fundraising has been limited and our funds are low however we have sustained the animals and their needs successfully. We have managed to overcome the increased workload and support our beneficiaries where Covid rules allowed.

Through social media, we have been able to reach many people who could not have visited the farm. Our plans to run small peer support groups will go ahead once we have a structure and welfare facilities. Through the multiple communications we have received, we know groups representing the elderly, carers, people responsible for children with additional needs and lone parents are desperate for support, advice, information and guidance. Our intention is to bring these people together to support each other, both

onsite and offsite. We will seek to empower people so beneficiaries receiving support can be maximised and take forward their experiences.

We have continued to deliver welfare benefit support and have successfully gained Personal Independent Payments and Disability Living Allowance for 11 people. These are people who would have 'missed out' on the welfare benefits because of their ability/capability and the complexity of the form filling application. During the pandemic, the applications for welfare benefits concerning disability fell dramatically. Non availability of the Advice Centres and support workers etc would have significantly attributed to this. Where we could not facilitate a full service, we were able to pass on verbal advice over the telephone. The extra benefits were crucial for some of the people who were unable to leave their homes and were struggling to make ends meet. We were able to fill the gap and provide conversation, an escape, support towards obtaining benefits, encouragement, and a voice at the end of the phone.

The year has been testing for the Trustees and volunteers. The barriers presented by the LA have added an extra unexpected pressure. The constant worry presented by Covid, to a very small charity, was almost insurmountable at times. However, as key workers, we were able to continue to work to support people and our staff whilst caring for the animals.

In summary, we have reached more beneficiaries than expected, albeit in a different way and different form from the planned service the care farm will offer. This has shown our adaptability and flexibility, and eagerness to remain person led, once more. We have extensive waiting lists from people wanting to visit the farm, participate in the craft activities that will be available, attend the forestry school. Multiple organisations have requested placements and Corporate organisations have offered services which we plan to use in the future.

Organisations that specialise in various disabilities and health issues have requested places for small gardening groups. We have connected with the local school who are keen to learn and share with us. Many of the walkers in the area regularly stop to discuss progress and we are able to keep them abreast of where we are.

We have been asked to assist with a couple of new gardening/outdoor groups in South Glos and plans will grow once Covid worries become less prominent.

Our voluntary hours have been very high this past year exceeding 3000 as have the professional hours given to us by specialists.

This has allowed the team to develop more skills which will be of particular benefit in the future. Once we are able to have a structure, we will be able to

accommodate more volunteers and more beneficiaries. Our plans to sow, grow and eat will be able to deliver indoor/outdoor cookery classes with specific outcomes. If the pandemic allows, we plan to have some community open days during the summer and later in the year, we have been promised a community orchard from another charity, One Planet Matters.

The Trustees have accepted no payments for their professional services or expenses. Every employee has significant barriers to employment and all are succeeding maintaining our positive successes and outcomes.

We await decisions from the planning department on permission to operate activity as since November 2020, this has not been allowed.

We have included our aims and objectives for planning permission to show the variety of activity we will deliver, once we have permission.

signed on behalf of the board by Maria Needs

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Needs', followed by a period.

4 February 2022



Empowering Futures	1182139
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Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	06/04/2020	To	05/04/2021
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Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Sales	5,700	-	-	5,700	1,329
Supported Employment	51,960	-	-	51,960	-
Fundraising Activity	4,562	-	-	4,562	3,617
Interest	0	-	-	0	1
Donations	4,537	-	-	4,537	7,880
Adhoc Recycling	-	-	-	-	6
MAF Funding Grant	-	1,500	-	1,500	-
CJRS Furlough	8,903	-	-	8,903	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	75,662	1,500	-	77,162	12,833
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	75,662	1,500	-	77,162	12,833
A3 Payments					
Equipment	1,142	-	-	1,142	1,282
PPE	463	-	-	463	519
Growing Staple Hill	87	1,500	-	1,587	-
Charitable Activities	6,315	-	-	6,315	2,328
Staff Costs	34,914	-	-	34,914	2,324
Site Costs	5,466	-	-	5,466	2,954
Admin Costs	1,840	-	-	1,840	-
Running Costs	1,766	-	-	1,766	2,502
Training	572	-	-	572	-
Planning Permission	7,776	-	-	7,776	-
Bank Charges	83	-	-	83	-
Sub total	60,424	1,500	-	61,924	11,910
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	60,424	1,500	-	61,924	11,910
Net of receipts/(payments)	15,238	-	-	15,238	924
A5 Transfers between funds			-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	924	-	-	924	
Cash funds this year end	16,162	-	-	16,162	924

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Current Account	16,162	-	-
			-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	16,162	-	-
(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))				
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets				
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use				
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities				
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees				
Signature		Print Name	Date of approval	
M. Needs		MARIA NEEDS	4/2/22	
S. Farthing		SUSAN FARTHING	4/2/22	



Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

**Report to the trustees/
members of**

Empowering Futures

**On accounts for the year
ended**

5 April 2021

**Charity no
(if any)**

1182139

Set out on pages

CC16a 1 and 2

(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 5 April 2021.

**Responsibilities and
basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent
examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Date:

4/2/2022

Name:

Susan Rickerby

**Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):**

ICAEW

Address:

118 High Street

Staple Hill

Bristol BS16 5HH

Section B

Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.