

THREADS IN THE GROUND

Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Charity Number: 1204411

Annual Report

August 2023 – March 2024

We are Threads in the Ground

This is our first ever Annual Report.

Enjoy.

Contents

Reference And Administrative Details	4
Chair's Statement	5
Trustees' Report	7
Objectives and Activities	8
Mission:	8
Our Programme	8
Core Beliefs	9
Guiding Principles	9
Achievements and Performance	9
Mushroom Sculpt	10
The Mushroom Bookroom	11
Warm Grain / Future Foods	12
Carbon Heritage	13
Financial Review	14
Reserves	14
Going Concern	14
Principal Funding	15
Structure, Governance and Management	16
Declaration	17
Statement of Financial Activities	18
Income	18
Expenditure	18

Reference And Administrative Details

Threads in the Ground, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Trustees:

Anisa Saleh, Trustee & Safeguarding Lead, (Appointed 21 August 2023)

Anna Victoria Disley, Trustee, (Appointed 21 August 2023)

Bhavisha Kukadia-Moran, Trustee, (Appointed 21 August 2023)

Julia Rawlins, Trustee, (Appointed 21 August 2023)

Miki Yasha Lentin, Trustee, (Appointed 21 August 2023)

Scott McFarlane Liddell, Secretary, (Appointed 21 August 2023)

Stuart Macalister, Trustee, (Appointed 21 August 2023)

Thomas Gerald Agar, Chair, (Appointed 21 August 2023)

Charity Registered Number: 1204411

Registered Office: Whitley Bay Big Local, 158 Whitley Road, Whitley Bay, Tyne And Wear, NE26 2LY

Company Secretary: Scott McFarlane Liddell

Chief Executive Officer: Adam Cooper

Bankers: The Co-operative Bank, 131 - 135 Northumberland St, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7AG

Chair's Statement

Building a new charity or company from scratch is a challenge, especially when its purpose is to make a major contribution towards addressing the most urgent crisis in modern human history.

Threads in the Ground was established as a new type of response to the climate emergency. Our approach will use creativity, play, and above all, hope to engage 8 million people across the UK and beyond in climate change, helping them to become good ancestors and spur their own communities into action. Our work will engage many with issues around climate for the first time, while for others it will deepen their creativity and confidence, helping forge climate leaders of the future.

We've made excellent initial progress in our first year. We've brought together a talented board of trustees to guide our progress and growth. We've established Threads as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) to ensure our mission remains our motivation in the future. Our new Impact Framework will help us measure our progress towards our goals.

Through exploration and testing we've refined our mission and objectives, and started delivering an emerging programme of activity with children and communities across the North East. While the delivery has been rooted in local communities, our message has begun to be amplified to a national audience. Our activities have included:

- Mushroom Sculpt trail co-created by the 200 children of Rockcliffe First School, their teachers and parents
- The Mushroom Bookroom, with the support and technical expertise of our Trustee Stuart MacAlister
- Starting our Carbon Heritage residency with Redhills CIO, a privilege for Threads as their first "artist in residence" organisation
- A new partnership with the Festival of Thrift around Warm Grain, our sustainable food futures programme
- National and regional media coverage via BBC Online, Look North, and BBC Radio Newcastle

None of this would have happened without the support of New Writing North, our core partner whose support has been invaluable. We are also hugely grateful to programme partners Redhills and Festival of Thrift.

Threads in the Ground really has just begun. We have put in place important foundations for our growth next year that will see us broker new partnerships, expand our reach, and engage larger numbers of people. This is going to begin with a long-term partnership with the National Trust early next year.

We will secure further core support to allow us to build our team of producers, coordinators, partners, and volunteers, helping us to expand and scale activities rapidly and sustainably.

Our ambitious project plans, centered on powerful stories, will help more people find hope and play in climate change exploration and action.

At a time of fear, anxiety, and disengagement around climate issues, our approach has never been more urgently needed. While the hard work has barely begun, I can't wait to see what comes next.

With warm wishes of hope and play,

Tom Agar, Chair of Trustees.

Trustees' Report

Year End March 2024

The trustees present their annual report together with the financial statements of the charitable company for the 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The charity was established in August 2023, so this report covers a short financial year.

The trustees confirm that the annual report and financial statements of the charity comply with the current statutory requirements, the requirements of the charity's governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) (effective 1 January 2019).

Since the charity qualifies as small under section 382 of the Companies Act 2006, the strategic report required of medium and large companies under the Companies Act 2006 (Strategic Report and Directors' Report) Regulations 2013 has been omitted.

Objectives and Activities

Threads in the Ground is a climate hope organisation. We unearth powerful stories to help more people be good ancestors.

Mission:

To help 8 million more people to think and talk about climate change in hopeful, playful ways by 2030.

Our Programme

We build our work around a set of chosen themes, some of the main drivers of the climate and biodiversity crises, and fertile ground for storytelling and engagement. The themes are: Carbon heritage; Built environment; Food systems; and Human connections to nature.

From these themes we have built a programme under 3 strands:

- 1. Carbon Heritage:** creative projects and commissions which diversify understanding of our living carbon heritage - the cultures and systems humans have built around extraction and burning of fossil fuels.
- 2. Food Futures:** communal exploration and experimentation with the ideas and technology which are shaping the new food systems humans will build in our lifetimes.
- 3. Mushroom Sculpt:** communities and schools playing and sculpting with bio materials. They gain a deeper understanding of our connections to nature and the impact of the built environment.

Core Beliefs

These are the beliefs which shape what Threads is.

Good Ancestors: Global warming and climate change will play out for thousands of years. What we do (or don't do) right now will echo and echo, louder and louder for each generation that comes after us. This means we are powerful, and we are privileged. Let's honour that, let's be good ancestors.

Hopeful Action: Fear isn't a good motivator. People have lots of different drivers, different things they find rewarding. We can make climate action inspiring and accessible. That is the best way to mushroom climate action.

Creativity is Key: Creative work (books, theatre, music, art...) help us make sense of the world. We feel good art on a deeper level than thought. We can sit alongside people we disagree with, both enjoy and come away changed by it. Creative work will help us explore our climate futures.

Guiding Principles

These are the principles we remind ourselves of when planning and evaluating our work.

1. **We are interested in systemic change.** Our starting point is usually hyper-local, but our thinking should always trend towards scale. "How do we better amplify and cascade" can be a constant guiding governance question and project requirement.
2. **We are engagers, rather than campaigners.** Our work is about democratising climate hope and action - making more opportunities for more people to shape and guide societal shift. We don't advocate particular policy or action ourselves.
3. **We want communities to internalise stories of climate hope** - we want climate hope ideas and stories to become normalised, for more people and communities to take for granted that they are powerful, that they have urgent work to do in reshaping what it is to be human, and that they are well able to do so.
4. **Our goal is not the alleviation of anxiety.** The reduction of climate distress could be achieved with a programme of distraction and minimisation. Reduction in anxiety and distress might be a metric of interest, but we do not want to build our impact thinking around it.
5. **Long-term Commitment:** Wherever possible, we commit to long-term relationships with communities, lasting many years. Significant change takes time and care and collaboration.

Achievements and Performance

Mushroom Sculpt

Mushroom Sculpt is our programme of sculpture trails and installations grown from bio materials. We collaborate with schools and community groups to design and grow the mushroom sculpt pieces - each project is unique, exploring the stories and ideas that are important to its participants.

In our first year, we worked with Rockcliffe First School to create our first ever school sculpture trail. The children at Rockcliffe came up with the concept of the Mushroom Kingdom - a fairytale land of fungal fairy houses and a castle which were placed in shops, public gardens and parks through Whitley Bay.

“From the beginning to the end of the project, the children were at the centre of every decision. Threads are unique, it’s clear that their goal is for the children to lead their own climate education and action.”

- Sharron Colpitts-Elliott, Head Teacher, Rockcliffe First School

The Rockcliffe project was picked up by BBC Radio Newcastle, BBC1 Look North, and BBC Sunday Morning Live.

We also ran pop-up Mushroom Sculpt workshops at Festival of Thrift, No Time for Waste Festival, and at National Trust properties.

We developed a range of open-source Mushroom Sculpt curriculum tools for primary school setting including lessons on materials and how-to guides.

The Mushroom Bookroom

The Mushroom Bookroom project was completed in May 2024, beyond the scope of this report...but our design process and first workshops are within scope, and we couldn't leave out this brilliant project from our first annual report!

We created the world's first fungal book shop, grown from bookshop waste. This was a collaboration between Threads and lots of 'mushroom curious' members of the wonderful North East Community.

We were chatting with the manager of The Bound independent book shop in Whitley Bay. They told us that **their small bookshop has to recycle 2 tonnes (2 rhinos!) of waste cardboard boxes every month.**

That left us thinking - how can we make this into a hopeful climate conversation - one that embraces the real life challenges of consumerism. Well, we'd built some stuff from mycelium mixed with hemp already, **so could we fungify some cardboard instead?**

Cardboard is a brilliant material, and recycling is great. *Way* better than making things from new. But recycling isn't magic, it still has a cost. Pulping and reforming those 2 rhinos emits about **800 kg of CO2**. This is a good example of how climate action is complicated, and requires a total re-think of all systems, processes and technologies.

We have been collecting binned bookshop cardboard and collaborating with people around the region to grow and craft an immersive mycelial space where you can contemplate beautiful and hopeful ideas of climate change and action.

The mushroom bookroom is a space to read, to think, to play, and to chat climate hope - our connections to nature; capitalism and waste; and **the unique ancestral power we hold by being alive in this crucial climate moment.**

The Mushroom Bookroom was visited by over 1,800 members of the public on its opening weekend at the Biscuit Factory. The structure is now available for loan and has appeared at the Booksellers Association Conference and BALTIC. We continue to design and grow additional shelves and features for this living structure.

Warm Grain / Future Foods

Our Future Foods programme is a volunteer-led exploration of food futures.

We work with volunteers to co-create public feasts and workshops, home meals, and discussion: all exploring the changing shape of our food systems.

The strand of work began life as “Dry Foods”, then became “Warm Grain”. We now just call it “Future Foods”. Which still isn’t quite right, but will do for now!

The Future Foods project has been designed following our research and conversations with organisations including the Sustainable Food Trust, WePlanet, Newcastle University, and more.

Our first pilot of Future Foods was run in partnership with the Festival of Thrift. The pilot concluded in September 2024 (outside the scope of this report), but was started in late 2023.

We worked with the Festival of Thrift to recruit 10 volunteers from across Teesside and the wider area. We ran a series of workshops and training days for the volunteers, introducing them to emerging ideas and discussions around sustainable food, and even took them for a rare tour at the Quorn factory in Billingham. We then supported the volunteers to plan and host their own Warm Grain meals - most hosted in their homes, but some at community centres and a church hall. Each meal explored a different theme or idea of food sustainability.

“I enjoyed exploring food past and thinking about its future sustainability whilst meeting the public who were participating. These fun and thoughtful activities, that were well planned, organised and delivered by Threads in the Ground, brought the community together to discuss pertinent issues of food sustainability in a world of climate change.” - Katharine, Warm Grain Volunteer

The volunteers were then involved in designing engagement workshops hosted at the Festival of Thrift.

We are continuing to work with the Festival of Thrift to design the next stages of Future Foods, incorporating all our Pilot learning.

Carbon Heritage

“Carbon Heritage” is more than the billions of tonnes of coal our families have burnt into the atmosphere.

It’s more than the generations of innovation and engineering, the train-tracks, engines, and wealth built up over the sigh of an empire. It’s the remembered feel of granda’s callouses, the tobacco and dust smell.

It’s the cold feel of the trumpet mouth-piece on your lips. It’s the generations of campaigning and demonstration that built our civil rights.

It’s more than that. It’s what we inherit. It’s what we’re doing now, what we pass on. So what is your carbon heritage?

Threads in the Ground was invited to become the first ever “Artist in Residence” at Redhills - the pitmans parliament and hope of the Durham Miners’ Association. Redhills is due to reopen in 2025 after 4 decades of lying dormant, and we were deeply privileged to have the opportunity to take time and space to explore ideas of Carbon Heritage and how Redhills can unearth and tell these stories.

“Threads have done a brilliant job of deepening our understanding of how heritage organisations can and should be engaging communities in the climate crisis – unearthing the stories and ideas that help our communities connect with their climate heritage.”

- Nick Malyan, CEO, Redhills CIO

Through the residency, our Director, Adam Cooper, spent time meeting and interviewing Redhills staff, board, and volunteers; retired mine workers and their families, academics, and members of the wider Redhills community.

From the residency we have developed the Ancestral Reverb project - an exploration of Carbon Heritage through sound and words. Drawing on archival recordings of the colliery brass bands, interviews with miners and their families, and digitally captured mine reverb. We plan to release the Ancestral Reverb sound piece in 2025.

Financial Review

During August 2023 and March 2024 we raised income of £11,380 and spent £7,971.27 on our work. This resulted in an unrestricted surplus for the year of £3,408.73.

We confidently expect income to dramatically increase year-on-year, with a mix of income from grants, commissions, and earned income through product and event sales and training.

The main financial risks for Threads in the Ground are our ability to consistently achieve fundraising targets. We are a micro organisation currently, with no fixed core expenditure. This means failure to achieve fundraising targets results primarily in reduction or pause in project delivery. Our goal is to secure multi-year core funding to establish a regular staff team.

We have an ambitious plan for growth, and warm conversations with multiple significant funders.

Our financial processes and procedures will develop as the organisation grows, stewarded by Scott Liddell, Trustee.

Reserves

Reserves are those funds not invested in fixed assets and designated and restricted funds. It is Charity Commission guidance on best practice that a reserves policy is reviewed annually in line with budget setting, based on salary and accommodation overheads for a three-month period.

We are a very new organisation which has not yet reached its stable size and model. With this first annual report in place we can now create and monitor a reserves policy.

At the end of the 23/24 financial year, we hold unrestricted reserves of £3,408.73.

Going Concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements.

Principal Funding

New Writing North

Threads in the Ground was established with the support of New Writing North. Our Founder, Adam Cooper, worked on staff at New Writing North as a Creative Associate while establishing Threads in the Ground. The support of Adam was further extended to the new Charity with a grant of £5,000.

“New Writing North employed Adam Cooper as a Creative Associate during which time he developed and delivered a range of innovative Climate Hope projects, helped us with our climate thinking and laid the ground for Threads in the Ground. I was delighted to join the organisation as a Trustee and remain so excited about the imaginative approaches Threads in The Ground takes in exploring and communicating the issue of our age. Adam Cooper, the founding Director of Threads in the Ground wears his deep knowledge lightly, is a brilliant climate communicator and most importantly finds provocative, fun and thoughtful ways to make the issue of climate change relevant in everyday people's lives. New Writing North remains committed to supporting Thread's in the Ground's hopeful approach.”

*- Anna Disley, Executive Director (Programmes) at New Writing North.
Trustee, Threads in the Ground*

We are forever grateful to New Writing North for their support. Everything we achieve, now and in the future, is thanks to them.

Redhills

We were delighted to take up the opportunity to be the first Artist in Residence at Redhills - the ancestral home of the Durham Miners' Association, known as the Pitman's Parliament, due to reopen its doors to the public in 2025 after 4 decades of hibernation.

Redhills have committed to a programme that explores their own inherited responsibility and power in the climate crisis, and appointed Threads in the Ground on a dual brief - to make a novel creative piece inspired by our Carbon Heritage research, and to provide a report for Redhills with recommendations on future residency opportunities and structure.

Redhills supported *Threads* financially with a commission fee of £6,000 in the financial year.

Future

We are delighted to report that both the Tyne and Wear Community Foundation, and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation have committed to supporting Threads in the Ground in future financial years. And that the National Trust has commissioned *Threads* to work on a long-term climate hope education and engagement project.

Structure, Governance and Management

Constitution

Threads in the Ground is registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

Governance

Our founding board of Trustees were recruited through a public campaign, stewarded by our founding Chair, Tom Agar, along with Director Adam Cooper, supported by Anna Disley of New Writing North.

The Trustees are a highly skilled and experienced group from a diverse range of backgrounds. The board meets regularly, with monthly meetings during the first 6 months of establishing *Threads*. They have been heavily involved in establishing the strategy, core principles and thinking that have guided us through this first year. Each Trustee has worked 1:1 with the Director on at least 1 initiative, ranging from support with project design, developing policies, fundraising, and establishing a communications plan.

Board meetings are run digitally, with Trustees joining from across the UK and internationally.

Declaration

The Trustees declare they have approved the Trustees report. Signed on behalf of the Trustees.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Tom Agar', written in a cursive style.

Tom Agar, Chair of Trustees

31.01.2025

Statement of Financial Activities

August 2023 - March 2024

Income

Grant Support, New Writing North	£ 5,000.00
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Commission, Redhills CIO	£ 6,000.00
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Earned Income - Events	£ 380.00
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Total Income	£11,380.00
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Expenditure

IT and Website	£ 430.22
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Project Fees	£ 827.80
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Project Materials	£ 696.65
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Staff Costs	£ 5,940.00
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Other	£ 76.60
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Total Expenditure	£ 7,971.27
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Balance	£ 3,408.73
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