



Trustees Report 2022

The Future of Seed Conservation

**TRUE HARVEST SEEDS IS A
PLANT CONSERVATION CHARITY**

At True Harvest Seeds we collect seeds from native origin plants growing in the wild. We preserve the collections in the Seed Bank at Kilclief, County Down, Northern Ireland. The seed is available for the restoration of plants back into the wild.



Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES | 4 |
| FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022..... | 4 |
| Objectives and Activities | 4 |
| Debbie Gillies, Founder & CEO | 6 |
| Objectives and Activities | 6 |
| Purposes | 11 |
| FINANCIAL REVIEW | 24 |
| Principal funding sources..... | 24 |
| Reserves policy | 27 |
| Future Plans | 27 |
| STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT | 30 |
| Governing Document..... | 30 |
| Recruitment and appointment of new trustees..... | 30 |
| Operational Structure | 33 |
| REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS | 34 |

Registered Company Number: NI621885 (Northern Ireland)
TRUE HARVEST SEEDS

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022

The trustees who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2022. The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

Objectives and Activities

Purposes and aims

Our charity's purposes as set out in the objects contained in the company's memorandum of association.

- 1) (a) Promote for the benefit of the community and future generations the conservation, protection and improvement of biodiversity through the provision of a botanical garden, a seed bank and repatriation of lost plant species, to protect endangered species in accordance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

(b) Source viable Irish native and naturalised seed.
- 2) Advance the education of the public so as to increase their

knowledge, understanding, appreciation and awareness of:

a) vegetable and other appropriate seeds, their value and the benefits arising from their conservation;

b) the principles and practice of maintaining seed biodiversity and sustainable development;

c) the design and application of seed conservation projects in the community;

d) educating trainers and teachers and developing training aids for schools to tie in with their curriculum;

e) the benefits arising from the maintenance of organic principles.

3) Provide and promote information and interpretive material about vegetable seeds.

4) Promote, foster and carry on study and research into the principles and practice of seed saving and to publish the useful results of such research.

DEBBIE GILLIES, FOUNDER & CEO

Objectives and Activities

Our main activities undertaken to further our aims

“Maintaining and further development of headquarters at Kilclief Seed Centre we have been able to continue conservation of Ireland's native-origin flora, plants that are indigenous to this island. Following on from 2021 wasn't easy and coming out of the pandemic in 2022 presented yet another set of challenges. Covid funding stopped entirely, yet the after effects were still in play.”



Debbie continued as CEO contributing vision throughout paid and voluntary hours. Continuing laying the ground work for the imminent creation of a permanent purpose-built seed bank for our islands' flora.

Activities

- The maintenance of the online shop and its population of items through continuing website development. Content is carefully selected for the advancement of people, nature and sustainability, all proceeds go to keeping core costs met and new projects emerging.

- Seed packing including creation of all seed packets.
- Making up and posting out all orders.
- Saintfield market one Sunday a month.
- Write quotes for various seed requests, outings and training.
- Overseeing the growing and harvesting, cleaning and storing of seed.
- Seed bank maintenance.
- Kilclief site maintenance, including machinery and equipment.
- Coordinating the work of our volunteers, including training.
- Maintaining governance issues, accounts and payroll.
- Developing and looking after conservation projects.
- Maintaining contact with the architect, Gerry Irvine of HIP Architects, councillor Colin McGrath and the planning department because the temporary planning permission on our temporary buildings was to run out on 16th March 2023. A new application must be made. John Hutcheson of HIP architects was contacted in February and discussions with his business partner Gerry Irvine

and outside assistance on seed bank requirements began.

- An application to Jobstart in February saw us successfully achieve funding for a person for 25 hours per week on living wage. However we were not able to find anyone to recruit; no applications were received despite much local advertising.
- Debbie continues as a committee member of ENSPA and BNFC.

Mike Thompson

Mike Thompson led the project to obtain the CRESI funding from the Department for Communities, administered by Heritage Lottery. Starting in late January and working with Debbie they created and lodged an application on 16th March, for a marketing coordinator for £96,000 over a 3 year period. Professional assistance for the application was received from Glenn Oakes. Award was confirmed on 31st March. After a lengthy recruitment period, and the helpful guidance of our HLF funding officer Jacqueline Grant, we recruited Kathryn Shaw.

- Mike T also led the funding application to Live Here Love Here as part of their Climate Environment Challenge. A large part of the £3,500 was for THS to award a subsidy to schools and community groups for their wild flower seed purchases from us. There are still funds available which are carried forward to use in 2023.
- Last but by no means least Mike availed of Newry Mourne and Down Council's Digital Growth

Programme, valued at £440, however the help we received from Johanne Jefferson was invaluable, many thanks to her.

- An onboarding system for the new marketing position was developed to ensure all training materials and supplies are provided.
- A brand book was developed to define official logo, colour scheme and font.

Helen

Helen's voluntary contribution was reliable and stable, she cut her days back to pre-pandemic levels of one afternoon a week. Her contribution to seed cleaning and processing makes her the most expert in this field in THS. She contributes greatly to Debbie in terms of advice and discussion on day to day issues as well as longer term thinking.

Mike Bennett (Forest Mike)

Mike's regular and reliable weekly voluntary contribution offers much stability, dependable work contribution and his delightfully dry wit.

Volunteers

Our team of volunteers comprised Fergus, Sue, Kathy and Bob, Isabella, Mary and new start Gill. Each regularly and reliably brought and shared different skills and talents and asked lots of seed growing questions.

Unfortunately Isabella returned to England and had to leave us in January, but not before her valuable contribution was made.

Karen

Karen largely ceased volunteering as the world opened up. To take over from her regarding funding applications was Mike Thompson, trustee.

Kathryn Shaw

Kathryn started on 26th September 2022. She has a track record of organisational skills, moderate marketing skills and was highly enthusiastic about the mission of True Harvest Seeds. Mike T is Kathryn's manager, helping her with onboarding, outside training and day to day workload. Debbie is providing the inhouse training on an ongoing basis, onsite and HR support, time management on a day to day basis.

Kathryn is proving to be a real help to develop and facilitate training courses for 2023.



Kathryn Shaw

Purposes

Purpose 1a: Provision of a seed bank.

- The seed bank continues to be maintained by Debbie and Helen. Funded by voluntary hours and money generated by the online shop sales. As of December 2022 the seed bank contains 331 collections. There are 18 more to be accessioned once they are ready.

Purpose 1a, 2 (a) (b): To protect endangered species.

- We worked with Aisling Gribben of Causeway Coast and Glens Partnership to locate and collect further Schedule 8 plant populations which live at Binevenagh. We made a collection of *Dryas octopetala*. We attempted to locate *Saxifraga oppositifolia* but had no luck, despite being given the coordinates by Karl Hamilton, we were not able to locate it. A major hold up to proceedings is the distance. To make things easier for Debbie, she rented a room there and visited Aisling at Binevenagh one day and Adam Mantel at Magilligan the next. With Adam, Debbie surveyed the *Hypochaeris glabra* that had been planted out in 2022, none had survived, Adam felt it was the cattle grazing that had killed them off.
- *Hypochaeris glabra* was sown again in February 2022 from the seed collected in 2021 at 36 Ardglass Road raised bed, and a subsequent population of 108 plants were cared for, again in the raised beds and eventually a

very successful seed collection was made and banked in the order of many grams. We did collect again from Magilligan sand dunes and can now cross breed in order to increase the genetic diversity of the samples in the seed bank as this population derives from just two plants, located side by side at Magilligan.

- The four *Crambe maritima* plants in the raised beds remain alive and well, but very few seed were collected in 2022. Organic seaweed feed was applied and will continue to be so.
- An attempt was made to start SOS8 part 2, with kind help from Marcus Mally on a zoom meeting in January, however Karl was not available to continue this work. He gave his blessing that THS continue without him and the project remains on hold until we can manage it.

Purpose 1b: Source viable Irish native seed.

- Contributions were made to the seed bank via collections from Ardtole ASSI and also with an expedition out with Grassroots Group from Belfast to Minnowburn, with kind permission from Craig Somerville at the National Trust.
- Contributions of yellow rattle were made to THS by Michael and Rachel of Ardtole and also Greer and Maureen of Slievemoyle. Both generously allowed Debbie to harvest yellow rattle free of charge and use it as a funding income for the charity. Both sites are naturally occurring populations.



Ragged Robin - *Silene flos cuculi*

Purpose 2: Advance the education of the public.

- Debbie continues to give talks and now we are suggesting donations as the norm.
- The website for SOS8 is kept up but was not added to in 2022. Payment is still made for it to stay live using unreserved funds raised by the shop.
- Volunteer numbers dwindled slightly in 2022 because of the opening up of the world again after the pandemic.
- Our SERC students, led by Joanne and Joe, came from SERC Downpatrick campus, we are delighted and honoured to host the students. Their volunteering gives THS a much needed work boost every fortnight and gives the students practical experience which adds to the quality of their portfolios. The students have helped with sowing seeds, plant care and site maintenance. Two students who loved the THS dogs, went on to study animal care.

Everyone at THS have really taken to all of the students, we have got to know them as individuals, they brighten up our week and we very much appreciate their regular and valuable contribution.

- We attended Down High's Eco fun-day on 30th April. Funded by the council we were able to give away seed trays with seed in having shown people how to sow up the seeds. We gave out information on how to look after the young plants and bring them on to be large plants

suitable for the garden.



SERC Students

- In May we started talks with Glebe House's Andrew McCracken for Debbie to help them with setting up their community gardens. Glebe House included Debbie as a consultant in their funding application.
- Sunday 26th June saw our last monthly attendance at Saintfield Market. New owners came in and they didn't invite THS to come back. Thank you to Peter and Yvonne who gave us the stand free of charge for over a year over 2 springs and summers, which allowed us to

raise funds, very much appreciated.

- In conjunction with Riverdale Primary School and with funding from Live Here Love Here, we made a video on how to make Protected Sowing, the video is available on our YouTube channel.
- The YouTube channel was taken up by Kathryn and made to work. She has been creating and publishing very informative and increasingly popular short videos. We will be creating content going forward, as time allows.
- In August we received the Irish group from the GAIA seed training course, onsite at Kilclief. The aim of their visit was to demonstrate and inform participants how we do what we do in terms of seed handling. The same is planned for 2023.
- In September we participated in Belfast Naturalists Field Club, conversazione bringing information leaflets and seeds for sale. Much of the evening was used to discuss the merits of yellow rattle, *Rhinanthus minor* and how to sow and maintain it.
- In October we worked with local Dublin artist Rachel Doolin. Rachel was constructing an in depth study on seed and seed growers across Ireland. Rachel held an interview with Debbie on the work of THS and after editing published the talk as a podcast on the internet. You can still access it here: <https://www.racheldoolin.com/debbie-gillies>

- In November Tracy Megoran kindly took a stock of our seed down to the Show in Dublin's RDS. She singlehandedly raised £184 for the charity over the weekend as well as raising awareness with the public.
- December saw a soft launch of our single Membership packs, this will be furthered in Qs 3&4 of 2023. The mailing list of people interested in following THS with our personalised emails containing insider information, first dibs on training course places and special offers was started. Volunteers, trustees and staff enjoyed Christmas dinner together at Summer Flame in Ardglass which was well attended.



Membership Packs available online

Purpose 2 (a): Vegetable and other appropriate seeds, their value and the benefits arising from their conservation; and

(b) the principles and practice of maintaining seed biodiversity and sustainable development;

We continue to source the best quality organic and often Demeter standard, open pollinated vegetable seed from reputable seed houses across Europe. For each variety we hold we give as much information as we can on the webpage for each. We stock seed that does well in Ireland. With the invaluable help of Fergus, we grow out samples of many of the seed lots, this helps us with descriptions, photographs and forms a large part of the germination testing that we do ourselves.

By supplying only open pollinated varieties people are empowered to save their own seed and use them next season. By actually doing the seed saving, people are learning how to manage seeds themselves. This has many benefits and we are seeing the opening of various amateur seed saving and seed swap events across the country.

In an ever increasingly uncertain future, seed knowledge is a vital part of sustainability on any island.

Purpose 2 (c): Design and application of seed conservation projects in the community.

- We continue to supply grasses for Lecale Conservation and have featured in a few times on the BBC in various programmes, Debbie gives a short description of the essential conservation work the THS undertakes in general, and is, as before, then featured helping plant some of the grass plants at the shore in Ballyhornan

beach. Grasses included native-origin Marram, Lyme and Sand couch grasses. They help maintain the integrity of the foreshore by mitigating coastal and water run off erosion. The funding from Lecale conservation £700 for THS paid for the above grasses in 2022.

- In conjunction with Newry Mourne and Down Council we participated in the Giant Festival at Warrenpoint. With their funding we brought seed trays, seeds and compost to the festival, we were located in the horticultural tent on both the Saturday and the Sunday in August. With a queue out the door both days we “sold out” of everything. We sent over 450 families home with seed trays, that we had shown them how to sow themselves and provided information on how to care for the seedlings going forward. A massive thanks to our volunteers Sue, Kathy and Bob for helping out, it wouldn’t have worked without you!
- We were invited to the Newcastle Eats and Beats festival, but Debbie was too tired to do more, so we said we’d consider it for 2023.
- We joined up with Sonairte, co Meath and ran a Seed Collection Workshop. The workshop was attended by one person. It was a good day and we made a high quality seed collection for the seed bank, *Lapsana communis*. We realised that we must put a lower limit on participants for future courses.

Purpose 2 (e): Organic principles.

- We became fully certified as organic on 5th May with the Soil Association for our field. This means we are now fully certified for these areas:
 - Growing at Kilclief and
 - For selling bought in organic seed, (which we were already certified for).

Debbie looks after inspections and certification.



- We have an onsite apiary run by Debbie in her spare time which did greatly assist in the pollination of the wild flowers throughout the year.
- Mark continues to maintain the field's weeding by tractor.
- Debbie concentrates on site maintenance, grass cutting using the tractor, strimmer and mower and removal of Schedule 9 weeds. Putting out the bins, general tidiness. Cleaning of all facilities and maintenance of cleaning rotas.

Purpose 3: Provide and promote information and interpretive material about vegetable seeds.

- Maintenance and improvement of the website. The decision to continue, enhance, promote and increase stock on the online shop has increased sales, providing our customers with greater choice and information. This in turn provides unrestricted funds for the charity, which helps cover core costs. In this way the charity continues to function.

Purpose 4: Making our information and knowledge available to the public.

- The collections are a source of native Irish-origin plant material and most are available to the public upon request. This is excepting the endangered species which will require special permission to administer.
- Information about the collections is currently on the website. We published a list of collections from 2015 - 2018 on our website www.trueharvestseeds.org from data collected at the seed collections. The list is in need of updating to show new collections.
- We are still holding open our project to put a dynamic database of the collections online. This is a matter for fundraising either from core funding or raised. A dynamic database would enable easier updating of the online record and provide paid staff hours.

- Through our work we have generally raised public awareness of the plight of our native plants by engaging with botanists, land owners and volunteers while delivering training courses and open days.

Debbie now has help from Mike T to maintain the website on Siteground server including the online shop. Mike separated out the shop from the main website to enable faster loading of both, the shop now exists on shop.trueharvestseeds.org while the main conservation website remains as trueharvestseeds.org. This was a large body of work and Mike's contribution was gratefully received.

- THS had permission from DAERA for wildlife licences for endangered plants and permission from NIEA for working on Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs).

Seed Database on THS Website



Search seed and herbarium collections by genus

A B C D E F G H I J K L M
N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Ranunculus acris
Ranunculus ficaria
Ranunculus flammula
Rhinanthus minor
Rumex acetosa



Family: OROBANCHACEAE
Species: *Rhinanthus minor*
Collection number: THS029
Location: Co. Tyrone
Collection date: Seed: 24 July 2015
Herb. Spec.: 2 June 2015
Collected by: D Gillies, K Moore, B Sterling, D Jones, S Jones
Verified by:
Habitat: Regenerated meadow
Plant material held: Seed, herbarium specimen, DNA sample
Collection number: THS035
Location: Co. Down
Collection date: Seed: 22 July 2015
Herb. spec.: 22 July 2015
Collected by: S Miles, D Gillies
Verified by: S Miles
Habitat: Coastal ASSI meadow
Plant material held: Seed, herbarium specimen

If you would like to request a seed sample or inspect a herbarium specimen please contact: Debbie Gillies

True Harvest Seeds Tel: 07516 264 888 debbie@trueharvestseeds.org
Registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC: 1191011



Hibernating ladybird in Wild Carrot

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Principal funding sources

Restricted funds

- In partnership with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO). The DIO granted THS £1,200 in 2020 to work with 3 species from Magilligan, because of covid this work was delayed and re-scheduled for 2021. We weren't able to complete in 2021 so work has again been deferred to 2022.
- With this funding we were able to continue to work with *Hypochaeris glabra* here at head office in our raised beds. In 2022 we grew out our most successful population to date and made a good seed collection from the plants we grew.
- We left the old plant remains in place as a final check against hybridisation against *Hypochaeris radicata*, which is present in the surrounding area. *Glabra* is an annual and *radicata* a perennial, so if any plants survived to re-emerge in 2023 then we would know that in that plant hybridisation had occurred. Thankfully, none was seen.
- Debbie visited Magilligan with Adam Mantel to view the planted out plants from 2021. As mentioned above no plants survived. Other species of keen interest were sought out and photographs taken.

Unrestricted funds

- Sales of wild flower, vegetable, herb and garden flower seeds raised cash which was used to pay for ongoing overheads, and new stock.

Going Concern

At the close of 2022 we are happy that the charity will continue to be a going concern.

- THS' shift from submitting funding applications to various bodies to reflect a more self-sustaining attitude is ongoing. The natural capital of the seed bank has been given a value for insurance purposes.
- Our market research had shown an appetite for small seed packets of wild flowers in 2022.
- We continue to import seeds into NI from the EU throughout 2022.
- We continue to:
 - use our expertise to provide seeds to the small packet market in Ireland as a whole. This service was used by many customers throughout 2022.
 - to keep prices low and offer postal service as an extra, rather than subsume the cost of postage into raised seed prices, this remains under review.
 - to provide "Open Pollinated" seeds. The seeds we provided are either Organic or Demeter

standard and are of a quality that can be used in seed breeding. This decision was taken with a view to potentially alleviating food shortages in the future, empowering people to save their own seeds, to swap viable seeds going forward.

- We added seed mixtures to our range of products. These have proved to be more popular than individual seed packets. They are better value for money, but asking customers why that is, has shown us that it is our expertise in putting together the seed mix that has been of greatest value.



Pure Bee/Butterfly/Bird Wild Flower Mix

Reserves policy

- THS have secured property from which to operate and buildings to work from for the long term, with no ongoing costs other than council rates and utilities. However, whilst the land is secure the temporary buildings were only granted temporary planning status by the planning department. Starting in February 2022, discussions with HIP Architects and seed banking experts from various sources we started to develop a plan for a permanent building. To pay for this we must use unrestricted funds, raised from the shop and courses.
- Mike T, trustee was instrumental in setting up a membership scheme. By raising funds and working with Debbie to fill our marketing coordinator position, THS has launched its individual membership scheme.

Future Plans

Marketing trustee Mike, CEO Debbie and Marketing Coordinator Kathryn have been investigating corporate membership and sponsorship.

With the need to develop a new seed bank building project fundraising will be of the essence.

- With the above in mind a large, £880,880 funding application was submitted to DAERA for the building of a superior plant resource centre at Kilclief. This application was unsuccessful (March 2023) and new ideas, for a much reduced building were conceived.

- An application will be made to the planning department in early 2023, for a permanent building in line with our organic and sustainable principles. It will blend into the environment, it will be passive, generate its own power, harvest grey and rain water and be purpose built for swifts, swallows, bats and insects.

The building will be agricultural in nature, with facilities for staff and volunteers to enable selling seed and other economic activity, all profits remain in the charity to further our aims.

- A position for a Retail Assistant has been created, we intend to search for initial funding to help us make this a paid permanent post. If Stormont reconvenes we may be able to avail of the Back to Work scheme and help someone local get back to work after a period of unemployment. This situation remains open for consideration.
- THS trustees and CEO would welcome help and or trustee applications from persons interested in advancing the charity through use of their expertise in finance and fundraising.



Harvest Delivery Route



Site Entrance



Elevations

3D Renders of Proposed Seedbank



STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing Document

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, incorporated on the 11 December 2013 and registered as a charity on 14th April 2014. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

Recruitment and appointment of new trustees

The directors of the company are also charity trustees for the purposes of charity law and under the company's Articles and shall manage the business of the Charity. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association the members of the Management Committee are elected to serve for a period of one year after which they must be re-elected at the next Annual General Meeting.

All member of the Management Committee give their time voluntarily and received no benefits from the charity.

Mr M Bryson, Miss K Lawrence, Ms J Cross, Miss R Knight
Mr M Thompson retire by rotation and, being eligible, offer

themselves for re-election at the next annual general meeting. To be appointed as a charity trustee each trustee must be nominated and seconded by other charity trustee members.

Director's skills

- Mark Bryson has run the worker's co-op EcoSeeds since 1997, growing out native origin wild flower seeds. EcoSeeds assists in native wild flower restoration projects both as consultant and / or contractor.
- Katie Laurence has experience in being on the committee of another NI environmental charity and has made herself available as staff liaison officer for THS. Katie is currently studying a masters in environmental management.
- Rebecca Knight is a chartered accountant working for global tax justice, she assists THS with governance.
- Julia Cross is a trained primary school teacher. She has extensive networking capabilities and is a perfect advocate for THS' ethos of saving our native and naturalised seeds.
- Mike Thompson is a director at Iconic Biscuits, with 20 years in marketing, sales and digital content production for international brands. He is a keen environmentalist

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements

and expert photographer who appreciates that THS is protecting future biodiversity on the island.



Filming How-to Videos at Riverdale PS



This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements

Operational Structure

The chief executive officer is responsible for the day to day running of the charity. Four quarterly meetings are held with between CEO and directors. Issues are dealt with as they arise with the appropriate director.

Related parties

- The charity had no new related party transactions during the year.
- Ms Debbie Gillies (CEO) is a related party of Miss Rebecca Knight's (Treasurer). However Miss Knight has not undertaken any financial transactions (or other transactions) with Ms Gillies while acting as an agent of the charity. Miss Knight was excluded from all employee on-boarding matters and has no oversight or input into Miss Laurence's role of staff liaison officer.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Registered Company number

NI621885 (Northern Ireland)

Registered Charity number

100201

Registered office

36 Ardglass Road

Kilclief

Co. Down

BT30 7NS

Trustees

M W Bryson

Mrs J C Cross

Ms R V Knight

Ms K L Laurence

Mr M Thompson

CEO

Ms D Gillies

Company Secretary

Mr M W Bryson

Independent Examiner

M.B.McGrady & Co

This page does not form part of the statutory financial statements

Chartered Accountants
Rathmore House
52 St Patricks Avenue
Downpatrick
Co. Down
BT30 6DS

Approved by order of the board of trustees on
..... and signed on its behalf by:

.....
R V Knight – Trustee



www.trueharvestseeds.org