



## 1. Overview

We have changed the reporting timeframe of this Annual report to match our financial report. So, this report summarises Neroche Woodlanders' activities as a social enterprise over the twelve months from April 2021 to March 2022. You may therefore notice overlaps with last year's report.

2021-2022 was a year spent coming back up to speed with nature-based wellbeing activities after the interruption of the pandemic period. For our families work this meant a continuation of the long-running Wild Explorers programme, while for our adult wellbeing work it saw a new phase of activity based on funding from Open Mental Health.



Alongside these programmes, we continued accessing Holiday Activities and Food funding to deliver sessions for young people during school holidays. Practical volunteering, and volunteering in support of

wellbeing sessions, continued energetically throughout. We also strengthened our equipment for woodland management, and in terms of governance, during the year we re-registered the Society to give Woodlanders exempt charity status.

## 2. Organisation and Governance

### FCA re-registration

The re-registration of our Community Benefit Society - Neroche Woodlanders Limited - with the Financial Conduct Authority was completed in February 2022. This has given Woodlanders exempt charity status, meaning we are formally exempt from Corporation Tax and can seek charitable income.

This was a hugely time-consuming process and we are glad it is now complete and we can refocus our Governance energies on more productive activities.

### Board of Directors

During the 2021-22 financial year there were six directors: Dr Rosemary Viant (Chair), Barbara Wilcox (Treasurer), Jenny Archard (Secretary), Gavin Saunders, Sarah Holdway and Rebecca Gould. The directors worked in a voluntary capacity and received no payment for governance-related work.

### Staff

During the year we contracted the following staff to manage, lead or assist on grant-supported or otherwise-funded activities: Jenny Archard, Sarah Holdway, Gavin Saunders, Alan Bruford, Jane Embleton, Rowen Wilde, Tiff Lovedale, Sarah Churchill, Eleanor Haynes, Lawrence Bole, Gilly Notely, Nancy Castle and Clare Smith. All staff were hired on casual contracts as freelancers. We have a flexible contract with a virtual administrator, Chris Heron, who does admin work in the background.

## Volunteers

Volunteers have continued to be essential to the running of many aspects of Woodlanders' work. A group of volunteers has worked alongside Jenny and Sarah on Woodland Wellbeing, Wild Explorers and Young Saplings, including Lucy Montgomery, Barbara Wilcox, Rebecca Gould, Hannah Montag, Jo Hind, Christine Langston, Joseph Jones, Andreas Hofmeyr, Sue Farrell, Richard Threlfall, Anna Stewart, Kim Russell, Debbie James & Alison Bevan.



Meanwhile Neroche Conservation Volunteers continued to operate throughout the year, on roughly four Wednesdays per month. During the twelve months ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, 40 task days took place, clocking up 346 person-days (or 1903 hours) of volunteer work (figures for 2020-21 were 41 tasks and 287 person-days). As well as Young Wood, the group visited Mount Fancy reserve, Thurlbear Wood, Ringdown nature reserve, Underway Meade in Combe St Nicholas, Piddle Wood, Devil's Pit Farm near Corfe, Quants, Keepers Field, Staple Common, Dunkeswell Abbey, and helped with stooking and threshing thatching straw for In-Thatch at Bishopswood. Tasks were organised by Peter Maben, Nick Milton and Gavin Saunders, and latterly Nick Milton stepped back from the group and was replaced by Mike Woodhead. There was regular volunteer support from Paul Jones, Peter Woodcock, Nigel Perry, Peter Joyce, Mike Woodhead, Mike Rostron, Claire Stenhouse, Dave Downs, Tim Woodcock, Chris Baker, Tony and Anna Spiess, Steve Shrewsbury, Fred Constantine-Smith, and Andreas Hofmeyr.

## Volunteer and staff development

Three volunteers and one staff member undertook chainsaw and brushcutter training with Blake Training, thanks to funding support from the Blackdown Hills AONB. We bought an outdoor first aid refresher course in September from Metabolous Education, which was attended by most of the staff team and several volunteers, to ensure our first aid qualifications remain up to date.

Our wellbeing volunteers had regular staff and volunteer training sessions, including updates on policies and practical skills. Jenny completed the Safeguarding lead course. We held a Practitioners Knife Skills training session with Richard Irvine that attracted people from around the region.



## Promotion and Publicity

Our website [www.nerochewoodlanders.org](http://www.nerochewoodlanders.org) has continued to develop during the year, and we use an online booking platform (Bookwhen) for charged-for events. We have three Facebook pages for different strands of work; Neroche Woodlanders' main Facebook page has 1277 likes; Young Saplings parent-toddler page has 155 likes and Wild Explorers (project) pages 88. Other promotion has included regular articles in the Neroche parishes newsletter.

We continue to be held up by Forestry England as a key example of independent use of the public forest estate for provision of social wellbeing and environmental gain. We were visited by the new Chief Executive of the Forestry Commission, Richard Stanford, in early October, and by a visiting team of Forestry England graduate employees in January.



### Collaboration

This year we have benefitted from funding from the following:

- Somerset Community Foundation
- Open Mental Health (SPARK)
- Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (conduit of Govt funding for HAF and Short Breaks)
- Blackdown Hills AONB and Blackdown Hills Farming in Protected Landscapes programme
- Somerset West & Taunton Council
- The Halpin Trust
- CIA Team - Short Breaks (Somerset County Council)
- Holy Trinity School
- North Town School
- Norman Charitable Family Trust

In addition we have worked with the following organisations and individuals:

- The Taunton One Teams
- SW&T Council
- Priorswood Community Centre
- The Link Centre
- Positive People
- Redstart Learning Partnership
- Holy Trinity School
- Minerva School
- Forestry England

- Butterfly Conservation
- Blake Training
- Metabolous Education
- Somerset Wildlife Trust
- Knight Brothers Buses
- Towards Tomorrow Together - babyloss charity
- Woodland Journeys

## 3. Project Delivery

### Wild Explorers

A two and a quarter year project funded by Somerset County Council through Somerset Community Foundation, this is primarily focused on bringing low income families who need extra support into the woods for a series of forest school sessions. In the early part of the project, we gave out our craft-at-home-packs to 46 families (94 children). We run Saturday sessions for families, and these well attended events, enable participants to gain the John Muir Family Award. We cook lunch together, go for walks in nature, share and do a conservation activity during each session.



The Friday afternoon parent and toddler group has been a real success, with parents telling us it makes a huge difference to them. We see a continuing need for the social contact that this group provides, as

well as the nature connection benefits. We provide transport and waterproof/warm clothing to those who need it. We also provide a hot lunch every session. This project comes to an end in the autumn of 2022.

In feedback parents have said:  
*“Getting out of Taunton on a regular basis has helped my mental health”*

*“My daughter is more confident, more independent and learning to interact better with children and adults”*

### Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) - Easter and Summer 2021

HAF is a Government fund targeted at children who are on free school meals, providing for activities and food-based sessions. The funds come through SASP, the Somerset Activities and Sports Partnership. We bid for a contract first at Easter 2021 and had 59 places for primary age children taken over 4 days. We served breakfasts, lunches, and snacks; made Easter-themed crafts, played games and supported those with SEND needs. Bus transport was included, and the children needed to be chaperoned. We offered a further five sessions in the summer, including a Family Feast, and had 92 places taken. For the Christmas holidays we offered another four sessions, just for children, and had 57 places taken. These sessions are complex, demanding and have taken a huge amount of organising as we have targeted the children who we think will benefit most from (a) being outdoors (b) getting fed and (c) being away from difficulties at home. To do this, we have worked very closely with Minerva and Holy Trinity Schools.

Doing the HAF sessions has enabled us to reach new families and bring them into other projects, or signpost people to other support. It has been a real stretch for the team, and we want to continue as it fits so well with our core values.

Feedback from one school contact:  
*“I have spoken with lots of the children who have said that they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The feedback from parents has also been really positive.”*

### Sessions for Families with Disabilities - Short Breaks

These ran during all the half terms and in the school holidays, with an average of five families per session. These sessions are for families with children with a disability and are always well attended, often with a waiting list. We provide a safe, non-judgemental place for families to just be themselves.



### Woodland Wellbeing (adult groups)

We were successful in gaining our first Open Mental Funding to run adult sessions from April to August 2021. A few people who had been to Wild Learning before the pandemic were keen to return, and new people were referred by various agencies. It was noticeable how nervous people were: the impacts of the lockdowns had a very big effect on this group. We were again successful in Autumn 2021 for a slightly bigger and longer project, to run into summer 2022. The project targets people with moderate to severe mental health challenges, and they come via mental health referrals, through agencies or by word of mouth. We spend some time staying in touch with people between sessions, and encouraging them to come.

These sessions have a well-structured and yet simple format: tea and toast around the campfire with a ‘check-in’ and talk about the day to come; a walk to explore the woods, with mindfulness exercise; practical crafts and activities including cooking lunch, and then a wrap-up, again around the campfire. Participants tell us that the responsive nature of the team and our activities plan enables them to feel supported and begin to have more self-

confidence as they are directing their own actions.



A consistent team of staff and volunteers enables the session to be calming, adaptable and nourishing on every level. Feedback from participants:

*“Lows - I really, honestly can't think of any. Highs - power of the 'collective' being in a beautiful natural setting, friendliness of the team, the time, preparation and thoughtfulness of the organisers. Allowing people as individuals to find their own path”*

*“A VERY Positive experience. Best and most insightful wellbeing or therapy course I have ever participated in”*

*“Here I am more aware of my environment than I am of my physical being. With reduced stress levels I feel less aches and pains.”*

### **Young Saplings**

Due to the Covid restrictions being lifted we have 13 regular families attending the sessions, all bookings are termly and we have a very healthy waiting list.

### **Way of Council and Vision Fast**

Through Jenny's Woodland Journeys, she offered one Vision Fast in the autumn, that was partly based at Young Wood and partly on Dartmoor. This nature-based rite of passage helped those who came to mark a change, cross a threshold into a different part of their lives. Jenny & Jane Embleton held many evening sessions of Way of Council in the woods. This practice of wholehearted listening and speaking in a circle also forms a core part of many Woodlanders sessions.



### **Climate-aware volunteering**

A successful bid to the Blackdown Hills Challenge Fund was used for a programme of volunteer recruitment and training on a climate change theme. This combined practical volunteering with discussion of a theme, and attracted 15 volunteers to a series of sessions which used the 'Way of Council' approach to deep listening. The resulting conversations allowed many perspectives, views, ideas and actions on climate change to be shared, with time spent carrying out coppicing work helping the conversation and reflection to be maximised. Some feedback from participants:

*“It was most heartening to meet like minded people whose company was very enjoyable.”*

*“I enjoyed meeting new people with common concerns with respect to climate change and sustainability. I enjoyed the informative sessions each week and learning from the knowledge and experience of others in the group.”*

Four climate-aware factsheets were generated for these sessions, and these are now available as downloads on our website.



#### Off-site sessions

Because of the pandemic most things we would usually do outside of the woods were not taking place. We did attend the August ‘Pride in Priorswood’ event for families during which we provided activities for many children and their parents.

#### Products

We undertook two charcoal burns during the summer of 2021 and sold some direct and some to a wholesaler, Woodsmith Charcoal. Charcoal production wound down after that and has taken a break during 2022 due to lack of staff time.

## 4. Young Wood

#### Site management

During the year we continued to look after Young Wood both as a setting for wellbeing activities and a habitat for wildlife. Coppicing work over the winter focused on widening one of the main rides on the site, while the advent of the tractor allowed for easier haulage of coppice wood from the previous year’s coppicing site.

We raised trees from seed or seedlings in the new tree nursery, and accepted some

donated oak saplings from volunteer Nigel Perry. Some of the latter were used to restock a glade in Cold Croft Coppice.

We obtained a grant from the Blackdown Hills AONB to purchase an alpine tractor, a 38hp Goldoni E50SN. This was supplemented by a grant from the Blackdown Hills Farming in Protected Landscapes fund to purchase a Del Morino mini-flail and a Logic timber trailer, for use with the tractor. These pieces of equipment were acquired on the understanding that they would be made available for other competent users to hire as part of a developing Blackdown Hills conservation machinery ring.



## 5. Financial Performance

#### Financial year 2021/22

The Financial Statement for the twelve months to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 is given overleaf. Turnover for the year was £112,614, with a net income against expenditure within the year of £29,108. The value of our fixed assets increased substantially due to grant-aided purchases, while our free reserves remained stable.

Henceforward we will move from cash accounting to an accruals basis, which will provide a more meaningful picture of within-year income against expenditure

## 6. Looking forward

Since the period covered by this report (ie. from April 2022 onwards) we have experienced our busiest summer ever, with Woodland Wellbeing, HAF and Wild Explorers

sessions running alongside the Dark Nature training course. At the time of writing however, in the early autumn of 2022, we do not have confirmation of further funding either for adult mental health sessions (Open Mental Health application decision delayed and pending), nor for families work, though Saplings and NCV continues. This underlines the uncertain, short-term nature of the funding basis of our work. The Open Mental Health bid, if successful, would provide a little more stability by funding two years of work, and we are exploring the development of training provision, part-financed by the Halpin Trust, which would be less dependent on short term grant aid.

This short term, stop-start situation can be addressed by developing a broader fundraising strategy based on a combination of charitable giving, grant aid and commissioned work, which can provide the continuity needed both by participants and staff. Changing our business model slightly to work with adults who receive Personal Independence Payments or other funding will also help. Our aim, if we can create such a longer funding horizon, is to move to employment of core staff rather than relying on freelance contracts. We are currently addressing these challenges thanks to a development grant from the Somerset Community Foundation.

Having survived the pandemic period, we now face, alongside the rest of society, a cost of living crisis and a period of deep political uncertainty, which could impact on our ability to attract new funding. This, along with the effects on an outdoor-based organisation of extreme weather patterns caused by a warming world, presents challenges that are set to become the norm, rather than the exception.

Neroche Woodlanders has the advantage of being a small, light-on-its-feet organisation with relatively low operating costs, which can make very efficient use of a small

amount of funding to deliver real benefits for people and for the woods themselves. We want to continue to make the most of this advantage, while seeking a more stable funding structure and a broader network of support.

Our values and ethos are needed in this world of crises, where life of all kinds is being put in so much peril from the systems that we humans have created. We will continue to have the courage to be present to the needs of 'our' people and the place we love, with the intention that we can leave behind us a story of regenerative action and true diversity of life.



Finally, during the year we learned with great sadness of the death of one of the founders of Neroche Woodlanders, the green woodworker Tim Beazley. We held a ceremony to plant a sweet chestnut tree in Tim's memory.

*Jenny Archard  
Becks Gould  
Sarah Holdway  
Andreas Hofmeyr  
Gavin Saunders  
Barbara Wilcox*

*October 2022*

## Neroche Woodlanders Limited

FCA Reg'n Number: 8719

## UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Covering the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022

Project grant funding (restricted)	Income	
	New Society	Transferred
Open Mental Health - Woodland Wellbeing	-	£15,000.00
SCF (Wild Explorers)	£26,297.25	-
Other Grants	£1,000.00	£1,000.00
AONB Grants	£28,757.60	£4,421.68
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>£56,054.85</b>	<b>£20,421.68</b>

Project Grant Funded (Restricted)	Expenditure	
	New Society	Transferred
Open Mental Health - Woodland Wellbeing	£4,274.79	£12,226.37
SCF (Wild Explorers)	£5,721.04	£13,968.03
Other Grants	£117.56	£1,350.55
AONB Grants	£7,946.20	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>£18,059.59</b>	<b>£27,544.95</b>

## Income from sales; charged services &amp; products (unrestricted)

Charged for sessions	£3,964.76*	£6,718.54
Halcon One Team (Short Breaks)	£1,964.00*	£3,596.00
HHH Holiday Activities	£4,694.00	£8,578.00
COVID Small Business Grant from SCC	-	£250.00
Product sales	-	£716.00
Consultancy	£1,150.00	£1,150.00
Contribution to training courses	£1,018.00	£794.00
Volunteering session charges	£835.00*	£290.00

<b>Sub total</b>	<b>£13,625.76</b>	<b>£22,092.54</b>
------------------	-------------------	-------------------

## Other income

Annual Subscriptions	£5.00	£15.00
Donations	£400.00	-
Bank Interest	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>£405.00</b>	<b>£15.00</b>

<b>Total income</b>	<b>£70,085.61</b>	<b>£42,529.22</b>
---------------------	-------------------	-------------------

## Cost of sales, charged services and products (unrestricted)

Cost of charged for sessions	£2,929.92	£2,884.34
Halcon One Team (Short Breaks)	£1,698.83	£3,181.28
HHH Holiday Activities	£4,054.23	£7,950.11
Cost of product sales	-	£450.00
Cost of consultancy	£990.00	£990.00
Volunteering	-	-

<b>Sub total</b>	<b>£9,672.98</b>	<b>£15,455.73</b>
------------------	------------------	-------------------

## Overheads

Rent	£500.00	£500.00
Insurance	£90.27	£958.22
Fees & subs	-	£59.99
Core resources	£3,245.76	£5,848.91
Advice to change society	-	£570.00
Depreciation of capital items	£1000.00	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>£4,836.03</b>	<b>£7,937.12</b>

<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£32,568.60</b>	<b>£50,937.80</b>
--------------------------	-------------------	-------------------

	2021-22	2020-21
Net Income/Expenditure	£29,637.70	£16,366.18
Shares purchased in 2021-22	-	£10.00

Capital items purchased	£23,639.60	£3,836.98
Balance in bank account brought forward from previous year	£41,272.07	£20,627.81
Current Assets - Balance in bank account carried forward to next year	£43,761.17	£41,272.07
Current Assets - Cash	£23.86	£124.74
Current assets - debtors at year end due to unpaid invoices (paid in following year)	£4489.00	£0.00
<b>Current assets - total</b>	<b>£48,274.03</b>	<b>£41,396.81</b>
Fixed assets (as detailed in balance sheet)	£29,779.60	£7,340.00
Liabilities - Restricted funds (grant income) carried forward to following year	£32,281.00	£26,935.00
Net Assets	£45,772.63	-
Free reserves	£14,743.03	£14,461.81

### Notes to the Accounts

These accounts are prepared using the Cash Accounting process (not accruals) where all receipts and payments within the financial year are included. A statement of assets and liabilities is also provided. The process is consistent with previous years.

During 2021 Neroche Woodlanders Limited (FCA number 31925R) was closed and the undertakings transferred to a new society (FCA Number 8719). The transferred accounts are summarised above under the Transferred column. The income and expenditure for the part year covered by the new society is identified under the New Society column. The New Society and Transferred columns added together represent the total turnover for the year.

These accounts reflect the monies and assets transferred and a separate set of interim accounts have been produced for the closed organisation and presented to the Members as part of the transfer process. The basic figures are included in the accounts above.

\* indicates that some invoices remain unpaid and are included as debtors.

### Independent Examination

The trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The trustees consider that an audit is not required but an Independent examination of the accounts was needed. This was undertaken by Ms Vicky Thomas of Young Somerset and the details of the examination can be provided on request. A number of issues were raised by the examiner which have been corrected where appropriate but the main concern was associated with the use of the cash accounting system. From April 2022 onwards Neroche Woodlanders will utilise an accounting software package (QuickBooks) which will generate the annual accounts using the Accrual method.