



Report for The Worshipful Company of Butchers February 2025



We are immensely grateful to The Worshipful Company of Butchers for your ongoing support to Farms for City Children's mission to provide five-day residential farm stays for children and young people from underserved communities across England and Wales.

This report provides an update on our work during the 2023-24 academic year, outlines how your contribution has made a difference to visiting beneficiaries and presents our plans going forward.

Achievements

Expanding our reach

Our farms are operational for 52 weeks a year enabling us to welcome more cohorts of beneficiaries to our farms. In line with our strategy to reach 120 weeks of bookings by 2027, we successfully generated 116 weeks of bookings in the 2023-24 academic year, comprising 99 weeks of school bookings, seven group residentials, one day visit and nine weeks of commercial lettings during school holidays.

Impact evaluation report publication

The transformational impact of the work of the Farms for City Children charity was set out in a detailed [report](#) produced by a Harper Adams postgraduate researcher, and in our previously circulated [Impact Report 23/24](#).

Festival of Learning

On June 11th 2024, we succeeded in bringing three heritage farms and beneficiaries to central London for our first-ever [Festival of Learning](#), in partnership with the Worshipful Company of Butchers. We were privileged to be joined by HRH Princess Royal, our ambassador JB Gill, beneficiary children and young people (CYP) and some of our key partners to celebrate nearly 50 years of enriching lives through immersive farm residential experiences.

Promoting nature connection and outdoor learning

We have proactively engaged in new opportunities to promote the wide-ranging benefits of outdoor learning, strengthen our offer to CYP and participate in the wider dialogue around diversity and inclusion. In January last year, our CEO, Donna Edmonds, was invited to speak at the Oxford Farming Conference panel discussion '[Getting People into Agriculture - Could Diversity Fix Farming Recruitment](#)' bringing together stakeholders from the agricultural, rural and food sectors. You may have heard our beneficiaries talk about our work with The Woodland Trust on [BBC Radio 4's Farming Today](#) programme on the 11th of March. Additionally, in April, we held a successful Taster Day at Nethercott farm for 12 educational leads in the Plymouth area to find out more about our life-changing offer. In May, we had the pleasure of sharing the work of the charity at the House of Lords during an afternoon hosted by Baroness Boycott and attended by MPs, Lords, journalists, entrepreneurs, publishers, and friends of the charity. Alongside our Festival of Learning in June, we also presented to 200 people at the

Patron HRH The Princess Royal • *Founders* Sir Michael and Lady Morpurgo • *Founding President* Ted Hughes OM

Chief Executive Donna Edmonds • *Chair* Rachel Goult

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University of Derby Nature Connections Conference and our CEO was invited to speak about inclusion at the National Educational Visits Conference 2024. The latter was followed by an article in the latest edition of the [EvolvAdvice](#) magazine, and Farms for City Children also featured several times in the School Travel Organiser magazine. In November, we delivered a workshop at the annual Council for Learning Outside the Classroom national conference which brings together up to 300 educators and learning outside the classroom providers.

We have also produced videos and blogs showcasing how we connect CYP to nature and encourage them to be environmental citizens. The latest videos show our collaboration with the [Woodland Trust](#) to create 'Roundels' and an overview of what a week of muck and magic looks like on our three farms: [Nethercott House](#), [Lower Treginnis](#) and [Wick Court](#).

Groups

During the academic year we welcomed seven groups, including the following three new ones:

1. Our first scout group, the Redditch District Scout Group from Worcestershire, which we hope will lead to further engagement with the scouting movement.
2. The Rugby Portabello Trust, a children's, youth and family support charity in London.
3. The Imagine If Trust which aims to relieve poverty, promote education and strengthen families in Liverpool.

Challenges

Working with children and young people during and since the national lockdowns and throughout the cost-of-living, we have seen first-hand that their mental health challenges are growing, time spent outdoors is decreasing and that there is a huge disconnect with the origins of the food we eat daily.

However, schools continue to face the devastating impact of budget cuts, with half of schools cutting spending on trips and outings this year. Consequently, more and more schools are unable to commit to visits or require additional financial support. Transportation costs and distance continue to be a challenge for some of our visiting schools too. To combat this, we work with schools to understand their needs and to provide a long lead-in to their visit, alongside signposting prospective school funding opportunities and staged payment terms as well as supporting financially struggling schools with the costs of the residential through our access funding. We have also strengthened relationships with schools closer to the farms through targeted funding and partnerships, in particular in Wales, Plymouth, Gloucester, and Portsmouth.

This year we have noticed, more than ever, schools with falling pupil cohorts, highlighting school years which have lower numbers of children due to falling birth rates, and locations where families have moved away. We work with schools with lower numbers of children to identify opportunities for mixed cohort visits. Our experience of this with a cluster of Welsh schools' pre-transition to secondary school has been positive for the children, teachers, and the charity.

We are also still experiencing the impact of the cost-of-living crisis which has resulted in food, utility, and livestock cost increases.



Impact

3188 CYP benefited from a total and purposeful immersion in nature and the farming world. The responses below from questionnaires completed by the lead adults, evidence that our three pledges were fulfilled and that a week on the farm deepened CYP's connections to their food, to farming and to nature.

Meeting our pledges:

	Exceeded	Met	Not Met
1. Increased Learning and Engagement	82%	17%	0%
2. Improved Connections and Wellbeing	80%	19%	0%
3. Enhanced Environmental Citizenship	68%	30%	0%

They also reported that the residential had an outstanding impact on the following key areas:

	Outstanding	Good Impact	Some Impact	No Impact
Enhanced Physical Activity	85%	15%	0%	0%
Improved Social Connections	89%	11%	0%	0%
Reduced Resilience on Technology	91%	7%	1%	0%
Increased Awareness of Nature	91%	9%	0%	0%
Enhanced Understanding of the Food to Fork Journey	81%	17%	2%	0%
Enhanced Noticing and Empathy	62%	32%	6%	0%
Improved Grit and Growth Mindset	85%	11%	4%	0%
Increased Service and Active Citizenship	76%	21%	3%	0%

As well as enabling CYP to develop the following learning and wellbeing behaviours:

	Outstanding	Good Impact	Some Impact	No Impact
Communication	66%	32%	1%	0%
Collaboration	82%	17%	0%	0%
Community	74%	22%	1%	0%
Confidence	84%	22%	1%	0%
Courage	87%	10%	0%	1%
Compassion	71%	22%	4%	0%
Connections	78%	18%	2%	0%
Conservation	62%	28%	10%	0%
Curiosity	80%	16%	2%	0%

Feedback from CYP at the end of the residential shows:

- 88% know more about nature
- 82% know more about where their food comes from
- 81% made new friends or got to know their friends better



- 87% were **more active on the farm** than they usually are at home
- 76% had a **better “not giving up” attitude** than before
- 69% had **enjoyed a break from digital technology**

The following quotes from the visiting CYP, lead adults and parents/guardians further capture the difference a week of muck and magic makes:

CYP shared how being outdoors made them feel:

“Calm and happy, and when I do more activities, I feel that I can believe in myself.”

“Energetic and inquisitive about nature”

“Amazing and more alive than I’ve ever been before”

“Calm and thoughtful for the world around me”

Teachers highlighted the transformational impact of the visit:

“It’s great to see the children relishing in an experience which is so different to their everyday lives.”

“The visit has provided memories of a lifetime for our learners, and they have had the richest, most authentic learning experiences, acquiring skills for life.”

“I would say the experience the children gain is one they will remember for a lifetime, the memories they make and learning experience they have is simply outstanding!”

“Children who are academically challenged really flourished. All children thrived being away from the city and to see them embrace every activity was something really special.”

Parents and Guardians shared the following feedback:

“The warmth and hospitality shown by the staff on the farm, the delicious food, and the engaging activities truly made his time there extraordinary.”

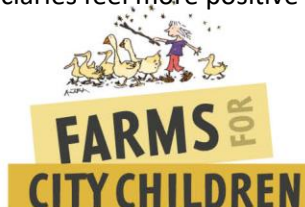
“Our daughter has learnt the importance of community, selfless acts and caring for others.”

Learning

As evidenced above, we have strengthened our evaluation methods over the last year to ensure we gather rich and robust input from beneficiaries. This includes producing a parent/guardian post visit survey and audio recordings of our focus groups with CYP to enable farm managers to really listen to responses without needing to take notes. At the end of each academic year, we also conduct a reflective session with our farm school managers to assess and learn from what has worked well and less well during the year, to share and develop good practices as well as to identify and address challenges going forward.

Through hosting CYP from mixed schools from the same Multi-Academy Trust, we have learnt about the benefits from this approach such as developing their social skills and relationship building with peers which is key for when children transition from primary to secondary school.

We have also learned that our activities, encompassing sowing, growing, and harvesting food, tending to livestock, and learning outdoors, have a significant positive impact on health and wellbeing, connection to nature and understanding of the field > farm > fork journey. Our feedback shows that beneficiaries feel more positive for



the future, feel better able to cope with change, when they leave than when they arrived and are better connected with each other, with nature and with their food.

Partnerships

We continued to enrich our residential offer through our partnership work:

- We continue to work with the Ernest Cook Trust as a partner in the [Outdoor Week of Learning \(OWL\) Collaboration](#). In addition to offering visits to Lower Treginnis for Welsh schoolchildren, this partnership now includes children from Gloucestershire schools through visits to Wick Court.
- This year we became the first charity partner of the TeenTips [Wellbeing Hub](#) to enable us to better support the wellbeing of our beneficiaries, staff and volunteers as well as fulfil our commitment to providing an inclusive environment for visiting CYP.
- Last August we joined forces with 8billionideas to establish [Grow24](#), a free educational competition for primary students in the UK that seeks to connect the next generation with nature in a refreshing and enjoyable manner.
- To increase our commitment to sustainability, we have connected [with Câr-y-Môr](#), Wales's first regenerative seaweed and shellfish farm, and [EcoDewi](#) a community group based in St David's working to tackle the climate emergency and the biodiversity crisis.
- Once again, we took part in the Childhood Trust Champions for Children campaign raising nearly £35,000 and increasing awareness of the myriad of benefits of our farm residentials.
- Promoting Children in Plymouth (PCiP) help us to ensure we reach the most vulnerable children in this city of two tales. Deprivation levels here are among some of the highest in the country. PCiP are able to introduce FfCC to schools which would most benefit from our offer and support some of the costs of visiting.
- The charity continues to maintain its partnerships with several targeted funders including the Steve Morgan Foundation in Liverpool and the Gosling Foundation whose funding has enabled FfCC to reach beneficiaries from military and low-income families in Portsmouth and Gosport.

Budget

Despite facing a deficit budget for 23/24 the charity made a small surplus due to some additional fundraised income, and lower than budget fundraising, staff, and operational costs. The lower costs are largely due to delays in planned recruitment and some resulting revised expenditure plans.

As we invest long-term in fundraising and communications and continue to build our number of bookings, we are budgeting for a deficit year in 24/25 (a year of consolidation), moving towards break-even in 25/26.

Looking forward

We have secured 113 weeks of bookings for the 2024-25 academic year, bringing us ever closer to our ambition of 120 weeks of bookings by 2027 to enable more children and young people from underserved backgrounds to benefit from our immersive farm residentials.

We will be implementing our new three-year business plan focusing on four pillars of work:

- Increasing fundraising;
- Strengthening communications;
- Maintaining our operations to ensure they continue to be safe, effective, and inclusive;
- Developing a people strategy.



Last year, we also launched our sustainability plan comprising eight areas of work with short, mid, and long term aims and KPIs which link to One Planet Living Principles and our overall goal of increasing our efficiency and reducing our environmental footprint.

We are growing our impact evidence through the three year Ernest Cook Outdoor Week of Learning (OWL) 'Nest' programme embedding outdoor learning in two schools.

We have welcomed five new trustees to our Board who bring a wealth of experience from the education, environmental, farming, legal, and events organisation sectors. Sadly, we also had to say goodbye to two longstanding Trustees who have both fulfilled their nine-year term.

Finally, 2026 will see the charity celebrate 50 years of welcoming children and young people to its farms for an immersive and transformative residential week which enables them to experience personal growth and develop transferable skills through food, farming, and outdoor activities that connect them with each other and the natural world. Our plans to celebrate this momentous occasion are evolving and will be shared in due course.





Thank you again for enabling Farms for City Children to make a life-changing difference to so many children and young people.

