



The Fordhall Community Land Initiative Ltd.

Fordhall Farm

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NEWS FROM THE FORDHALL COMMUNITY LAND INITIATIVE.

Care farming comes to Fordhall

After months of negotiations with Shropshire Council, Fordhall Organic Farm, the community owned farm on the outskirts of Market Drayton, is happy to welcome a group of four adults with learning difficulties who now attend the farm's community garden on a weekly basis.

The care farming project based at the farm provides support for the group to build their confidence, self-esteem and their connections with our wider community.

Community gardener and leader of the project at the farm says "we hope this is an enjoyable, productive and stimulating environment, enabling these young adults to participate in a variety of activities and events at the farm."

"Cooking is an activity which the group appear to enjoy and over the last month they have made chutney using fruit and vegetables grown organically on the farm and locally. Our farm chef, Nicola Shuttleworth, has been serving up the chutney in Arthur's Farm Kitchen, which the group have found extremely rewarding."

Gardening is something the project did regularly when it worked with the Wayfarers over the last three years. The project was previously funded through the Big Lottery Local Food fund, but when funding came to an end in March 2014, the project had to become financially sustainable to continue on. Since then the team at Fordhall have been working hard to secure contracts with Shropshire Council to provide a valuable facility for some of their service users. All came to fruition late last year and the project is now forging ahead.

Bex said "Cooking over an open fire, enjoying a shared communal meal with the smell of wood smoke in the air is a real treat! We recently made a home grown stew - as well as the usual onions and pumpkin, we added bolotti beans which our volunteers had grown over the summer and then dried. Revived with an overnight soak in water, they added a lovely touch to the delicious stew. We also now have a fabulous cedar wood green house in the garden, donated by a long-term supporter, and put up by volunteers at the last volunteer weekend. Already on sunny days, it is the place to be – warm and out of the wind."

"We are very grateful to be working with the Shropshire Council and these wonderfully gifted adults. I find it an extremely rewarding project to work on and I look forward to it expanding and growing over the coming years."

ENDS

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History of Fordhall Farm

Charlotte and Ben Hollins have lived at Fordhall their entire lives. Their late father, Arthur Hollins, stopped putting chemicals on the land at Fordhall after the Second World War when he realised the benefits of working in harmony with nature and all that it provides for free.

Arthur Hollins not only had a keen affection for nature, but he was also one of the first in the country to produce and sell yoghurts. These were delivered all over the UK, from large department stores to the small markets of Edinburgh.

However, the farm has only ever been tenanted by the family and was in danger of being lost to development.

Charlotte and Ben Hollins, at only 29 and 26 years of age, have built up a thriving business from a run down farm, and have recently created the Fordhall Community Land Initiative.

They knew they were facing eviction, and recognised that as young farmers, it would be impossible to achieve a mortgage and be able to make repayments simply from the farm income. This is precisely the reason why so many young farmers are steered away from the industry, but Charlotte and Ben were not deterred, in fact they were determined to make it work.

By working with the local and wider community and from thousands of people simply offering time and skills, the society was formed and funds were raised. This society is one of the first structures of its kind in England and needed to raise £800,000 by July 1st 2006 to save the land. After which it will have been placed on the open market and sold for development.

It achieved this by selling non-profit making shares in the farm for £50. Each share makes the shareholder part owner of Fordhall Farm forever and entitles them to a vote within the society at the Annual General Meeting.

The vision is that Fordhall as a community owned educational and functional asset will actively promote sustainable farming and healthy living through reconnection and access. The land is now leased to the Hollins family providing affordable and accessible farmland for new and young entrants to farming.

Working with the Fordhall Community Land Initiative Board and hundreds of volunteers this project is both exciting and inspiring.

The tea room and restaurant are run by the Fordhall Community Land Initiative as a social enterprise, where profits are reinvested into the societies education work.

The new renovation includes classrooms and office space.

The farm shop and butchery are run by the tenant farmer, Ben Hollins.

Charlotte Hollins manages the trust, Fordhall Community Land Initiative that owns the farm.