



# Every Day is Open Farm Sunday

Connecting People to  
Farming and Nature

## Evaluation Report

01 APRIL 2022 - 31 MARCH 2024



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



**Kent Downs**  
National  
Landscape

**Farming in Protected  
Landscapes programme**

# Contents

<b>4</b>	<b>1 Introduction</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>2 Executive Summary</b>
7	2.1 Bore Place - our vision and mission
8	2.2 Project outcomes
10	2.3 Key findings
12	2.4 Conclusion
<b>13</b>	<b>3 Project delivery</b>
14	3.1 Place: new structures and spaces
19	3.2 Nature and climate: habitats and landscape
22	3.3 People: people and engagement
27	3.4 Being an example to other farmers
<b>28</b>	<b>4 Evaluation</b>
30	4.1 Outcome 1 - Improving habitats
33	4.2 Outcome 2 - Increasing knowledge
43	4.3 Outcome 3 - Increasing skills
45	4.4 Outcome 4 - Improving wellbeing
48	4.5 Outcome 5 - Improving soft-/life-skills
49	4.6 Outcome 6 - Inspiring behaviour
<b>51</b>	<b>5 Learning and development for the future</b>
<b>52</b>	<b>6 Additional outcomes and recommendations</b>
<b>53</b>	<b>7 References</b>
<b>54</b>	<b>8 Partners</b>



I have come to understand that farming, even in the traditional ways, always has costs for the natural world – it is usually a downgrade on what might be there if humans weren't. but once we accept that, we can also see that good farmers do more than produce commodities: through benign inefficiency or good stewardship, their farms can allow a great many wild things to live in and around them; holding water that would otherwise flow off the land and flood villages, towns and cities; and storing carbon that would otherwise alter the global climate.

James Rebanks, 2021



# 1 Introduction

Bore Place is the 500-acre estate owned by the Commonwork Trust, our charity focused on regenerative farming and land management, working to inspire people to connect with nature. Situated in the beautiful West Kent countryside, it provides a space to help create a world where people and nature work together to regenerate the planet and ourselves. Entrusted to public benefit in 1976 by Neil and Jenifer Wates, the charity has been focused on sustainable land management alongside supporting people to live fulfilling and sustainable lives for over 45 years.

The focus of the Trust has never been more pressing: our planet is in crisis. According to the WWF's Living Planet Report 2022, wildlife populations have declined by 69% on average since 1970 [1]. The most recent State of Nature Report, published in 2019, suggests there has been a 13% decline in the abundance of UK wildlife since the 1970s [2]. Growing pressure from climate change and biodiversity loss means we need to change our behaviours on a global level, manage our soils, and restore habitats, whilst producing organic food.

The recently released State of Nature in Kent 2021 report outlines the following pressures on biodiversity in Kent:

- "Intensification of land management, such as use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides in agriculture, ploughing of semi-natural grasslands, loss of traditional orchard;
- Direct loss of habitats through increased development, urbanisation and over-tidying and other land uses;
- Degradation of soil health and productivity resulting from nutrient depletion, declines in levels of humus, and erosion and compaction of soils;
- A wide range of pollutants, from many sources, that threaten wildlife and have an impact on all habitats, with the most widespread current harm from excess nutrients (phosphate and compounds of nitrogen) in air and water. There has also been a rise in concern over plastic pollution, particularly in the aquatic environment;
- Lack of appropriate management, such as the loss of woodland management as woodland products become uneconomic to extract, or recreational overuse of sensitive areas;
- Habitat fragmentation, which impairs species movement or migration, leading to populations becoming isolated and less resilient to changing climate conditions;
- Invasive non-native species, which can out-compete native species, and pests and diseases, which can have impacts beyond the species they directly attack;
- Climate change – loss of land through sea-level rise, temperature, rainfall and weather pattern change, and other environmental factors alter habitat composition and species movement and survival. Kent is a gateway for species colonising from Europe in response to climate change, including Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS);
- Lack of investment and a drop in public sector expenditure on biodiversity, which in the UK, as a proportion of GDP, has fallen by 42% since a peak in 2008/9." [3]

According to statistics released by DEFRA, in 2021 the farmland bird index - a good indicator for general biodiversity on farms – halved for all farmland species, compared with levels recorded in 1970 [4].

In light of these challenges facing biodiversity, we are reviewing our land management systems and working to be a model farm, trialling environmentally-conscious regenerative farming methods, restoring habitats and natural processes, and engaging the wider public in issues of environmental importance.

“

**It is important for children and young people to learn about farms because with global warming, agriculture is changing and we need to protect the world.**

Felix, Year 5; Ide Hill Primary



# 2 Executive summary

Launched in April 2022, Every Day is Open Farm Sunday was a two-year project aimed at using Bore Place to provide the Kent Downs AONB (now known as Kent Downs National Landscape) and DEFRA with a showcase of Farming in a Protected Landscape, by delivering interconnected projects, with people, place and nature at the core, whilst increasing farm business resilience.

We want to open our farm to be accessible for everyone to experience a real farming environment, learn about our protected landscapes and gain a better understanding of how we can farm to produce food sustainably.

We aimed to provide sustainable recommendations about how to engage the public with farms through self-led experiences, events, education programmes and volunteering, as well as biodiversity monitoring and habitat management through citizen science programmes.

We also aimed to set up a farming hub within the AONB for farmers and landowners to collaborate to improve outcomes for people, climate, nature and place.



**Watching the cows being milked from the Milking Parlour Visitor Experience**

## 2.1 Bore Place - our vision and mission

**Our vision is** to create a world where people and nature work together to regenerate the planet and ourselves.

**Our mission is** to enhance the planet in all that we do, to inspire people to live sustainable, happy and fulfilling lives. We will achieve this by inspiring people to connect with each other and with the Earth while taking responsibility for our shared future.

Taken from the Bore Place strategy for 2022-27, our three priorities are:

To deliver restorative and regenerative change

To inspire, educate and involve

To understand and influence



**Volunteers working in the community garden**

## 2.2 Project outcomes

Farming in Protected Landscapes identified four outcome themes for the project: People, Place, Nature and Climate. We have focused on delivering six key outcomes in line with these themes, alongside delivering a number of outputs directly linked to 'Place'.

Much of the work on this project overlaps multiple outcomes.

### PLACE

Outputs            Creation of a new Farm Gate  
                          Creation of new outdoor learning spaces  
                          Development of a new farm cluster network

### NATURE and CLIMATE

Outcome 1        Improving habitats

### PEOPLE

Outcome 2        Increasing knowledge about food, farming and nature  
Outcome 3        Increasing practical outdoor skills  
Outcome 4        Improving wellbeing  
Outcome 5        Improving soft-/life-skills for young people  
Outcome 6        Inspiring pro-environmental behaviour





## 2.3 Key findings

### Outcome 1: Improving habitats

A number of habitats have been identified and subjected to improved management practices include hedgerows, grassland, orchards and ponds. Six key indicator species have been chosen to be monitored going forward, each linked to a certain habitat type, in order to understand the impact of our actions and practices on the diversity and abundance of the species onsite. We have carried out soil assessments and will continue to monitor soil condition.

We will create a schedule for habitat assessments and species monitoring to better understand expansion and improvements in habitats onsite over time.

### Outcome 2: Increasing knowledge about food, farming and nature

We have created new two outdoor learning spaces for visiting school groups, a Farm Gate for visitors to be able to buy Bore Place produce, and a visitor experience to engage people with how milk is produced and how our farming and natural landscapes are linked. We have new walking trails with accompanying interpretation and maps, and special spaces to sit and enjoy the views and countryside.

100% of teachers on day visits with their students said their class had improved knowledge about environmental issues and improved understanding of where food comes from.

We have increased the number of young people attending weekly educational programmes at Bore Place. The majority of young people attending these programmes are now undertaking formal qualifications to recognise their learning achievements.



Farm Gate vending machine

## 2.3 Key findings

### Outcome 3: Increasing practical skills

Our volunteering and education programmes provided opportunities for people to learn practical skills. Most volunteers feel they have improved skills, and young people on multiple visit programmes have been able to work on developing practical skills such as wildlife ID, fire-lighting and cooking, across their visits.

“Coming to Bore Place makes me feel happy and energetic.”

Winston, Year 5; Ide Hill Primary School

### Outcome 4: Improving wellbeing

Almost all volunteers at Bore Place and Bough Beech nature reserve feel their volunteering plays a positive role in their social and mental wellbeing.

Teachers from weekly visiting SEN schools reported observations that their students are happier, more independent and more confident since starting their weekly programmes at Bore Place.

Whilst we have a limited number of teachers to engage with to obtain feedback about our regular visiting groups, we recognise that our feedback sample size is very small. For future evaluation work, we will create a survey schedule, and refine our survey questions and data collation methods to improve survey return rates and enlarge our sample sizes.

### Outcome 5: Improving soft-/life-skills for young people

Developing soft- and life-skills is fundamental to all our educational programmes. Students undertaking LASER Awards have successfully completed a number of units directly linked to learning life-skills such as cooking and how to get around safely, as well as soft-skills such as how to communicate at work, and work as a team, with a 100% pass rate in 2022-23 and on track to achieve in 2023-24.

### Outcome 6: Inspiring pro-environmental behaviour

The majority of visitors engaging with our community programmes (volunteering and events) feel inspired to make pro-environmental changes such as making their own garden more wildlife-friendly and buying local, seasonal foods. Teachers across all programmes recognised the importance and impact of outdoor learning and reported wanting their students to be involved with more outdoor learning experiences.

The new Farm Gate provides opportunities for visitors to buy very locally produced foods, support local businesses and buy direct from the farm. People walked through area where the new Farm Gate has been installed over 70,000 times throughout the duration of the project. Since the installation of the Farm Gate in September 2023, the footfall in that area has increased by 9.7% (to February 2024) compared to the same 6-month period the year before, giving us a very early indication that the Farm Gate is attracting more visitors. Whilst this data is not able to indicate impact, it does help us to estimate an increase in our reach.

## 2.4 Conclusion

Overall this project was hugely successful in providing opportunities for people to interact with and learn about the natural world and farming environment, and to engage with issues related to food production, and nature.

Across all visitor programmes and interactions, we have engaged people of all ages with our natural and farmed landscapes. We have provided opportunities to learn about where food comes from and how it is produced through practical, farm experiences, and provided outdoor education and volunteering programmes designed to develop new practical and life-skills. This project, and our ongoing agenda, has inspired people to want to participate in more pro-environmental behaviours.

“——

**To be interested in food but not in food production is clearly absurd.**

Wendall Berry, 2002

# 3 Project delivery



## 3.1 PLACE: new structures and spaces

Under the objective of 'Place' several new structures and spaces were created and enhanced at Bore Place to enable more people to access the countryside and to further their knowledge and understanding of nature and farming systems.

### Outdoor learning

Two outdoor classroom spaces were created within the woodland and orchard areas on site, and the pond platforms were replaced to enable the reopening of a largely disused area for schools to undertake pond dipping and other surveys.



**The Hive, new outdoor teaching space**



**Donald's Pond with new pond dipping platforms**

### 3.1 PLACE: new structures and spaces

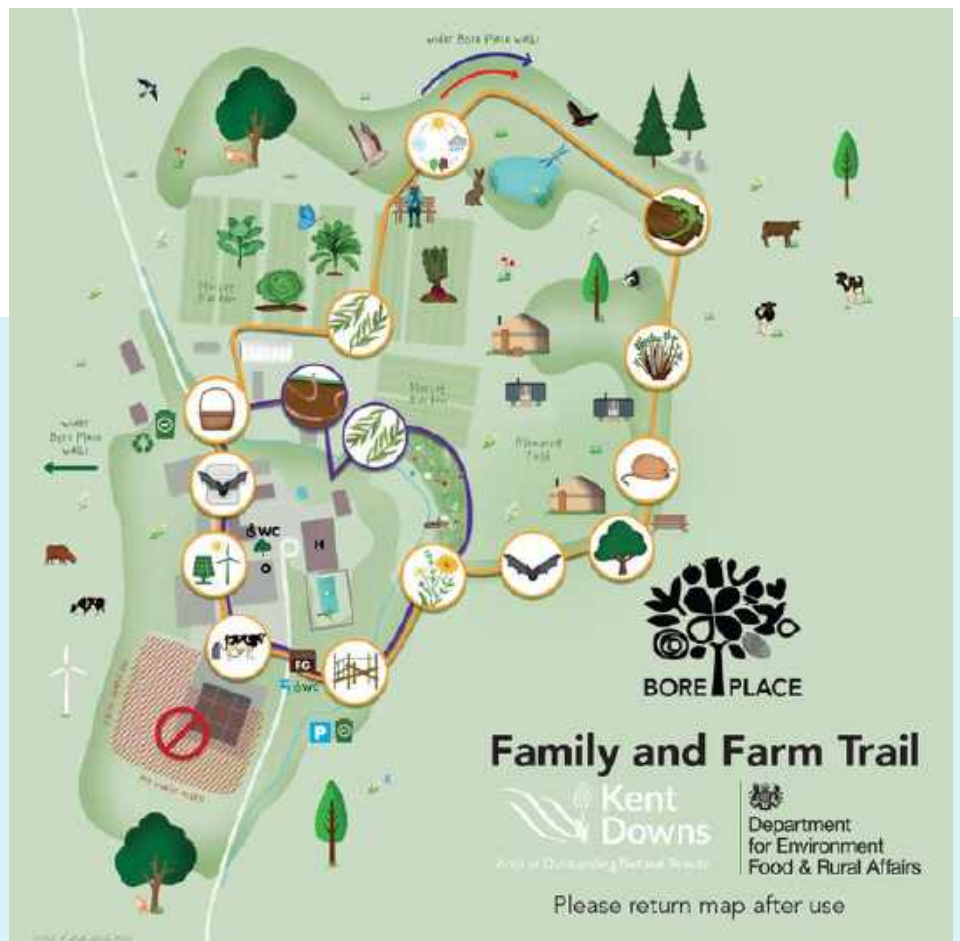
#### Improving countryside accessibility

Accessible changing facilities including a hoist and changing table have also been installed into a public toilet to enable more opportunities for people to visit Bore Place who may not otherwise have been able to come.

The newly created Family Trail and Farm Trail make use of the new chalk tracks to provide additional accessibility for people as well as the dairy herd, and interpretation boards and points of interest have also been installed along the trails, to educate and involve visitors in the projects and activities taking place at the farm, along with benches and picnic areas to enjoy the views and environment. The trails make the countryside and farmland more accessible, and will provide opportunities for new audiences to connect and engage with nature, and the health and wellbeing benefits associated with spending time outdoors.



**Way markers for the new Family Trail and Farm Trail, with new picnic bench**



### 3.1 PLACE: new structures and spaces

#### Engaging with food and farming

The biggest additions to the Bore Place site that enhance the place and the opportunities available for people to engage and be involved in the activities on the farm are the Milking Parlour Visitor Experience and the Farm Gate.

Our new Milking Parlour Visitor Experience is an accessible visitor attraction and learning space. There are two viewing areas available, open to the public all year round, to be able to view the milking taking place. There is also a television where visitors can watch a short video involving various members of the Bore Place team talking about our regenerative farming ambitions.

There is also an animation explaining some of the methods we use to improve our soil health. Upstairs alongside the upper viewing lounge, there is a hand-painted mural depicting our six indicator species and information boards on how nature integrates with the farming activities at Bore Place.



**Observation lounge with mural depicting the 6 key indicator species, information boards and benches to view the milking**



“ —

It was interesting to see the cows being milked and read all about a year of farming and what it entails.

Visitor, Carols in the Cowshed 2023



### 3.1 PLACE: new structures and spaces

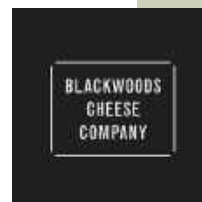
The Farm Gate has allowed visitors to purchase food grown and produced at Bore Place at any time of the day through the vending machine that has been installed. The location was chosen based on visibility and ease of access for all visitors, due to the proximity to the car park. The Farm Gate has helped us to support the local businesses and farmers that operate on the Bore Place site as well as providing local produce to people and helping them to become more integrated in the process of food production. Additionally, young people on weekly learning programmes at Bore Place have gained valuable work experience from helping to maintain the space and restock the vending machine.

Products on offer include Bore Place milk, Blackwoods Cheese Company cheeses made onsite using Bore Place milk, Happy Belly fermented dairy products including kefir and yoghurt (produced using Bore Place milk), organic vegetables grown on the Bore Place market garden, and honey produced onsite. There is also a "What's On" board where our upcoming community events are advertised, and other local points of interest can be put up for visitors to see.

Our virtual spaces have also had a revamp, and our website was redesigned to enable us to better tell the story of the Commonwork Trust, from its founding days through to the present. It has been modernised and work has been carried out to improve the SEO, with an external agency tasked with improving our metadata and researching keyword data. The aim is to improve the visibility of the site to the local community interested in farming and nature, with the goal of increasing visitors to Bore Place.



Farm Gate



What's On at Bore Place

## 3.2 NATURE AND CLIMATE: habitats and landscape

### Habitats

As part of our commitment to improving nature and resilience against climate change at Bore Place several areas of habitat on site have been subject to improved management practices and actions to enhance the condition of the habitats. The works have been able to inform our approach for the next 10 years, outlined within our habitat management plan.

Orchard tree pruning and works to sympathetically remove brambles and other scrubby growth from overtaking the trees without damaging them, or the surrounding habitat have been undertaken.

A new hedgerow cutting schedule has been implemented on a minimum 4-year rotation, allowing any of the hedgerows on site that are not roadside to grow up and out, into the fields, and allowing important habitat for many species such as brown hairstreak butterflies.

Trees have been removed from pond and river edges to allow more light into the water and improve the diversity of aquatic life present in each of these habitats. A targeted effort has been applied to remove Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* (an invasive species) from the riverbank running through the site.



**Volunteers clearing a pond**

### 3.2 NATURE AND CLIMATE: habitats and landscape



Improvements to the woodlands on site have also been made, including removal of invasive species, and additional monitoring carried out through the citizen science programme.

Several areas of grassland have been identified as meadows and are managed for enhancing biodiversity. Some areas are in better condition, with higher diversity of plant species, than others, and the management of each of these areas is slightly different. This has allowed us to look at different methods of management, such as mowing and hand raking the grassland, or a well-timed graze of the area by the dairy herd once per year. We have also planted yellow rattle seeds *Rhinanthus minor* to help improve the species diversity. As well as being an important wildflower species, yellow rattle is semi-parasitic to grass species and can help to reduce the dominance of grass species in a sward, allowing more wildflowers to establish.

The chalk tracks that have also allowed the public to access the wider farm more easily, have also helped to improve grazing management, allowing us to get the cows outside earlier in the year and grazing the pasture, improving their welfare by being able to move around the farm more safely, and also protecting the fields from unnecessary compaction.

All this helps to manage the grazing more effectively around the farm to produce the highest yield of grass.

The fencing installed on the fields on site have also allowed for better management of grazing in these areas with certain parts of the field closed off from grazing and the cows moved on to allow grass and soil regeneration.

## 3.2 NATURE AND CLIMATE: habitats and landscape

### Indicator species

Six indicator species or species groups have been identified for us to monitor the effectiveness of our habitat management on site, and to understand the impact of our actions and operations at Bore Place on the wildlife present. Each of the indicators chosen can be linked to the range of habitats we have present on site and are also differently impacted by the activities taking place.

Species on site have been monitored by staff, volunteers, students, and members of the public using the Coreo app, where a bespoke project has been created to monitor biodiversity at Bore Place.

### Soil improvements

A full soil assessment of the site was carried out in April 2022 to help with nutrient management of the soil going forward.

A further, more in depth assessment of the soil carbon was carried out in six representative fields in April 2023 to help understand the carbon being sequestered in the farm environment and to help us develop and measure the success of different approaches to improving soil organic matter (which represents carbon sequestration in the soil). This has included looking at other funding sources for putting in Paulownia tree lines in some of the fields, increasing hedgerow depth and length across the site, and assessing the feasibility of other ways of introducing trees into the pasture.

As earthworms are one of the indicator species being surveyed, we are also able to monitor the condition of the soil twice yearly during the worm counts and compare the condition of different fields and areas of habitat to inform management and grazing regimes.

### Our six key indicator species



hazel dormouse



common blue butterfly



dragonflies and damselflies



reptiles



skylark



earthworms

## 3.3 PEOPLE: people and engagement

People are at the very heart of everything we do. By engaging people with everything we do, we aim to create the change in thinking and practice that our land management and food production needs for a healthy and thriving planet.



### Volunteering programme

We expanded our volunteering programme in 2022 and started a new weekly group with a focus on conservation at Bore Place. This means our volunteer programme now includes two weekly groups undertaking gardening tasks and conservation activities at Bore Place, and a group that meets twice monthly to undertake conservation work at neighbouring Bough Beech nature reserve.

Our volunteering offer is designed to provide opportunities for members of the public to engage with our work and offer practical assistance to causes and activities that are important to them. The activities across the groups have included tasks such as habitat management, wildlife surveys, maintenance of footpaths for access to the countryside, garden maintenance, growing flowers, and improving educational areas, such as pond dipping platforms. Our groups provide a means to meet, connect with and learn from likeminded people in a social and informal way.



**Volunteer raking grass**

### 3.3 PEOPLE: people and engagement

#### Engaging with the local community

We developed and delivered a programme of events making full use of our landscapes to encourage our local community to learn about and engage with subjects around food, farming and nature. We delivered a range of courses, workshops, and family events at differing price points throughout the year, offering hands-on experiences in our authentic farming environment. Our events were across different themes with guided walks focusing on birds, trees, reptiles and small mammals; foraging walks; citizen science surveying events; workshops to learn to make yoghurt, labneh and paneer; astronomy workshops and talks; and family events.

All events were delivered at Bore Place except for a family Apple Day, honouring the ancient apple orchards at Bough Beech nature reserve and encouraging people to buy seasonal, locally produced fruits and vegetables.



What's On at Bore Place



BioBlitz, May 2023

### 3.3 PEOPLE: people and engagement

To celebrate the opening of our new Milking Parlour Visitor Experience and Farm Gate, we offered a free Food and Farming open day for families in our local community to come and be immersed in a fun day out on the farm. We offered locally produced food and drink, including produce from our own site, as well as the opportunity to meet the farmer, see the calves and see the cows being milked. Additionally, visitors were able to take part in children's activities linked to nature and farming, visit our market garden, and explore the new walking trails. The event was a showcase for people to come and see regenerative farming methods in practice and learn about the environmental outcomes we are working to achieve.



**Food and Farming Open Day 2023**



**Dairy tasting at Food and Farming Open Day 2023**



**Food and Farming Open Day 2023**



### 3.3 PEOPLE: people and engagement

#### Educational programmes

Our education and learning programmes for young people were designed to reach a wide range of audiences and communities, including local primary and secondary schools, schools for young people with special educational needs (SEN), and universities.

Many of the young people visiting from SEN schools attend on a weekly basis, enabling their learning to be compounded week on week. We now offer accredited learning programmes, via LASER Awards and Arts Award, for young people with SEN to work towards a recognised qualification, as well as the John Muir Award, to recognise the learning achieved during these weekly visits.

#### Regular weekly visiting schools



### 3.3 PEOPLE: people and engagement

In addition to one-off school day trips for local schools, we have partnered with six local primary schools to deliver multiple visits throughout the academic year 2023-24 for years 4, 5 and 6.

Previous experience evidences that learning impact is much stronger across multiple visits, compared to one-off visits. We are currently mid-way through delivering the 72-visit Local Schools Project programme, and the children will have the opportunity to experience the farm and our natural landscapes across the seasons, and undertake activities such as nature walks, ecology surveys, cooking from the land and learning about dairy farming.

#### Local Schools Project Partners



What is something new you have learned?

**“Bats aren't actually blind!**

Year 3/4 pupil; Weald Community Primary School, 2024

## 3.4 Being an example farm for other farmers

This FiPL funded project has allowed us to start to establish ourselves as a showcase and example to other farmers. Two extensive soil training sessions were held at Bore Place in April 2022 and March 2023 where local farmers were invited to join to learn more about understanding their soil health and how different farming practices impact on their soils.

Farmer meetings were also held at Bore Place, the first in April 2022 involving SES water (the local water company) and talks by the Environment Agency, and Natural England.

Following these initial visits, we have also worked to establish a farm cluster with local farmers in the area, working with SES water and South East Rivers Trust. There have been two farm cluster meetings held at Bore Place in March 2023 and May 2023.



**Visiting families meeting the calves**

# 4 Evaluation

Every Day is Open Farm Sunday provided both a continuation and extension of our Green Recovery (Bore Place: We Are Nature) project. We have created a robust and meaningful evaluation framework to assess the impact of our Every Day is Open Farm Sunday project, and our wider mission. There were 11 outcomes linked to Bore Place: We Are Nature and a further complementary seven outcomes for Connecting People to Farming and Nature.

We have distilled these 18 outcomes and created a condensed evaluation model with six key outcomes, which have been used for our evaluation discussion.



**Food and Farming Open Day 2023**

## 4 Evaluation

### Distilling our outcomes

#### Green Recovery Project outcomes

1. Habitats are bigger, better, more or joined up.
2. We have the baseline knowledge to plan and deliver further habitat improvements post-March 2023 that are bigger, better, more or joined up.
3. A wider group of the community are involved in engaging with and learning about nature.
4. Children and over 55s of all abilities feel engaged in issues about their local environment and natural heritage.
5. Children and over 55s feel more connected with the outdoor environment and nature.
6. Children and over 55s have improved physical activity.
7. Children and over 55s have improved social and mental wellbeing.
8. Children and young people (16-24 years old) and over 55s have improved understanding.
9. Children and young people (16-24 years old) and over 55s will feel engaged and empowered to enact physical changes at home.
10. Children and young people (16-24 years old) and over 55s will have improved skills.
11. Children and young people with additional needs will have access to an accredited nature-based education programme.



#### Farming in Protected Landscapes outcomes

1. A wider group of the community are involved in engaging with and learning about food and farming.
2. Young people with additional needs have achieved accreditation for their learning at Bore Place.
3. A replicable model for a social enterprise community food shed has been achieved. \*
4. A toolkit for creating on-farm volunteering programmes has been created.
5. A replicable model for running sustainable on-farm events programmes has been created.
6. Collaborative projects have been established to deliver landscape benefits for climate, nature, people or place post-March 2024.
7. A replicable model for a social enterprise community food programme has been achieved.

## Our six key outcomes



#### Outcome 1 Improving habitats

Habitats are improved to make them more favourable for wildlife.



#### Outcome 2 Increasing knowledge

Bore Place visitors have improved knowledge and understanding of food, farming and nature.



#### Outcome 3 Increasing skills

Bore Place visitors develop practical skills linked to food, farming and nature.



#### Outcome 4 Improving wellbeing

People on multiple-visit programmes have improved social and/or mental wellbeing.



#### Outcome 5 Improving soft-/life-skills

Young people on multiple-visit / residential programmes have improved soft-/life-skills.

(e.g. preparing a meal, teamwork, communication, independence)



#### Outcome 6 Inspiring behaviour

Bore Place visitors feel inspired to enact more pro-environmental behaviours.

## 4.1 Outcome 1: improving habitats

Habitats can be very slow to show significant improvement as a result of habitat management actions. However, as part of this project we have set up a robust and clear monitoring programme which uses citizen scientists, and our visiting education groups to help undertake the monitoring. Our hope is that by having this plan in place, we can show how our actions as part of this project, and others going forward, are better documented, and the impacts fully understood. This will help inform our management going forward, as well as our ability to influence and help others undertaking similar work and demonstrate its value.

The Coreo app has been used throughout the Every Day is Open Farm Sunday project with 47 members total contributing to the data set, and over 1,200 species records submitted between March 2022 and February 2024. This has helped us to develop our indicator species list, understand what we already have on site, and produce a baseline report of biodiversity at Bore Place.



**Reptile survey**

## 4.1 Outcome 1: improving habitats

Over 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of habitat improvements were delivered at Bore Place between 2022 and February 2024 including works to improve grassland areas, orchards, ponds, woodland and the stream running through the site.

Our continued monitoring will allow us to understand how this has impacted the wildlife that rely on these habitats. With time, this monitoring will allow us to evaluate our impact more scientifically and with more detail, as we are able to compare year on year, with the same survey effort.

“

**There is a social aspect of volunteering in meeting like-minded people, but for me the greatest benefit is to get out in the fresh air, get a bit of exercise and enjoy open countryside away from the towns and traffic. I could just join a rambler's club, but volunteering gives me a sense of doing something positive for our environment.**

Robert P; Volunteer, 2024



Wildflower meadow at Bore Place





## 4.2 Outcome 2: increasing knowledge

### Education programmes

Pupils and students on all programmes attended Bore Place for day visits 12,371 times April 2022-March 2024. 571 young people have taken part in programmes with multiple visits, and the remainder attended one-off trips.

Children visited on school day trips 5,975 times, and we hosted 206 classes visiting over 141 days. 36 class visits were funded through our Local Schools Project, supported by the Big Give Green Match Fund. 384 primary school children are currently taking part in our Local Schools Project, and they will each have attended up to six times during the 2023-24 academic year.

### We worked with:



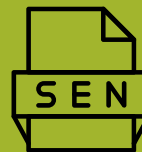
**65**  
primary  
schools



**12**  
secondary  
schools



**4**  
colleges/  
universities



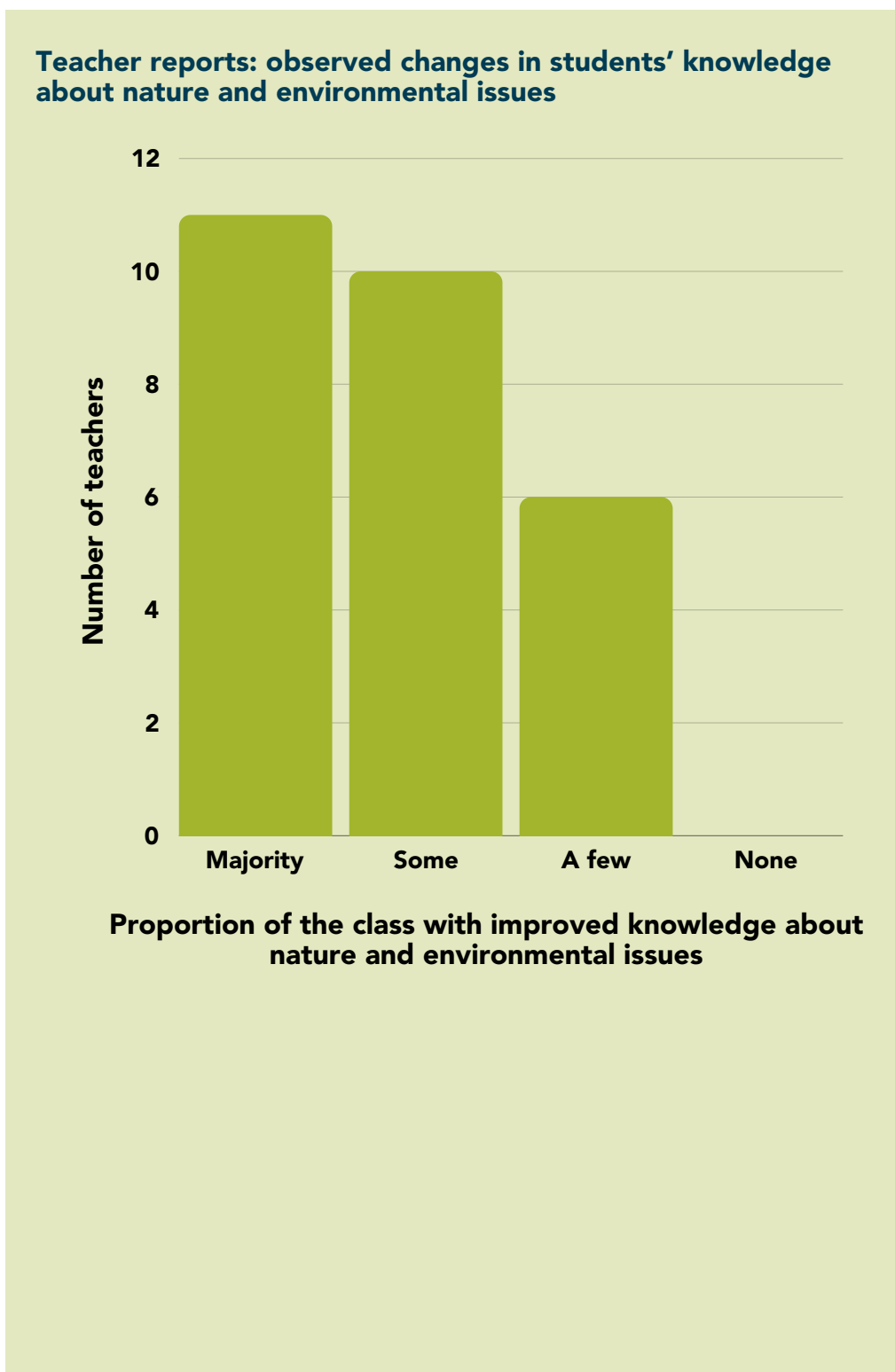
**11**  
SEN schools

**“ It is important for children and young people to learn about farms so children know how their food is made and where it’s from.**

Freddie; Year 5 Ide Hill Primary, 2024

All teachers who visited for a day trip reported positive observations of improved knowledge about environmental issues and nature in at least a few of the students in their class in a follow-up survey (n=27).

This data from one-off visits corroborates with mid-programme reports from teachers (n=10) attending through our multiple interactions Local Schools Project which indicate that most teachers (90%) feel that the majority of their class has improved knowledge about environmental issues as well as improved understanding of where food comes from.



## 4.2 Outcome 2: increasing knowledge

The children attending through the Local Schools Project picked out different aspects of learning they had enjoyed.

**“ I liked the bats because they were so interesting and they were very cool**

Year 5 pupil; Hever C of E Primary, 2024

**“ [I heard] bird noises that I haven't heard [before]**

Year 5/6 pupil; Four Elms Primary, 2024

**“ I learnt some new vocabulary today and I learnt new ingredients in baking!**

Year 3/4 pupil; Four Elms Primary, 2024



**Pupils carrying out a worm survey**

It should be noted that we have limited collatable impact data from teachers who have attended one-off school day visits at Bore Place as we changed our post-visit survey questions part-way through the two-year project, resulting in two small data sets.

**“ ———  
[My class is] more conscious and caring about animal welfare. [They are] more knowledgeable about [the] milking process, companion planting and ultra processed foods.**

Year 6 teacher, Chiddingstone C of E Primary School 2024

## 4.2 Outcome 2: increasing knowledge

### Accredited learning for young people with SEN

The number of students with SEN undertaking alternative learning programmes at Bore Place has increased by 53%, from 74 students (attending 272 weekly visits combined) in 2022-23, to 113 students in the current academic year 2023-24. We are on track to have delivered 748 weekly visits by the end of this academic year.

All learning programmes at Bore Place are centred around outdoor education, and all teachers who responded to our mid-year survey (n=3) said their class had improved knowledge about environmental issues and improved understanding of where food comes from. It is acknowledged that this data set is small, but the responses are consistent with one another, and we will seek further feedback at the end of the programme.

After successfully delivering the Arts Award programme for several years, we appreciated the importance of young people receiving recognised qualifications as part of their outdoor learning programme at Bore Place.

In early 2022 we also began offering the John Muir Award, a non-accredited course designed to encourage awareness and responsibility for the natural environment. It is an environmental award scheme designed to be inclusive and accessible as well as challenging. Whilst not recognised as a formal qualification, this award has provided opportunities for young people unable to access traditional formal accreditation with a recognition of achievement.

For those students able to access an accredited programme, we felt it was important to identify an appropriate, achievable and accessible accredited qualification to fit with the diverse needs of the young people. We have been offering LASER Learning Awards since September 2022.

This awarding body was selected as their suite of training units can be tailored to meet individual learning needs, and provided the flexibility required for our students. Units include 'understanding organic horticulture', 'recognising trees and plants and their importance for wildlife' and 'getting to know woodlands'.




## 4.2 Outcome 2: increasing knowledge

In 2022-23, 46% of students on weekly visit programmes undertook a qualification or award, and achieved a 100% pass rate.

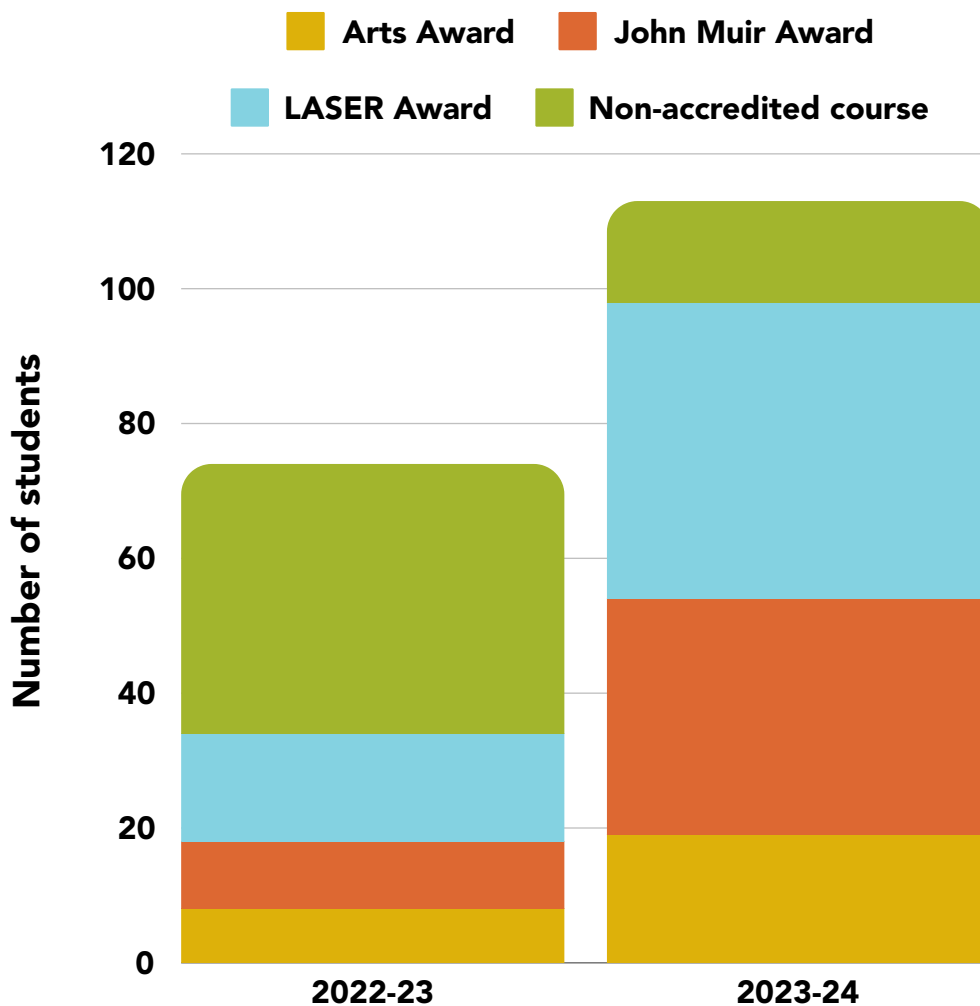
This academic year (2023-24), the number of students undertaking a qualification has increased with 87% of students are undertaking a qualification or award, and all are on track to achieve.

### Accredited learning achievements

Pass rate for 2022-23	Pass rate for 2023-24 (projected)
100%	100%



### Courses undertaken by students at Bore Place



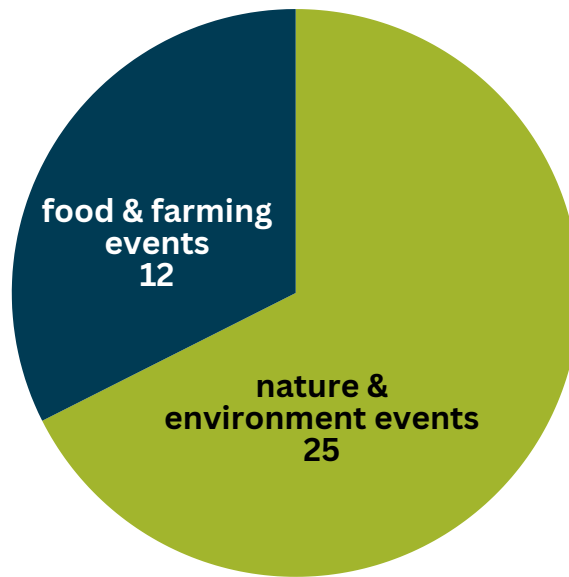
## 4.2 Outcome 2: increasing knowledge

### Community events programme

We delivered a diverse programme of 37 events (15 aimed at adults and 22 for families) for the local community to engage with issues linked to food and farming (12 events) and nature (25 events). 84% of visitors asked (n=55) said their visit to Bore Place had improved their knowledge about food, farming or nature.

All events were ticketed to maintain control of numbers, and most events were designed for 10-20 guests. Our Open Day and Carols in the Cowshed events were on a much larger scale, designed to increase the number of visitors we reach and encourage new visitors.

Event themes



“ Children have a clearer understanding of why we need to stick to paths to protect wildlife in meadows, and why it is important we plant different wildflowers in our garden.

Event participant, Aug 2023

“ [I now have] experience of using a bat detector and the different sounds the bats make (a bit like a dolphin) [and I have learned] that bats can roost in the smallest of holes and anywhere!

Citizen Scientist;  
Bat Emergence Survey, Aug 2023

**84%** of event visitors have improved knowledge of food, farming or nature



Citizen scientist using a bat detector

## 4.2 Outcome 2: increasing knowledge

We hosted Carols in the Cowshed at Christmas in 2022 and 2023. In 2022, local carollers leading the singing and 102 attendees enjoying mulled wine and mince pies, and watching the cows being milked as dusk fell.

In 2023 we hosted 176 guests and collaborated with two local choirs, enhancing the community aspect of our Carols in the Cowshed event. Visitors told us they enjoyed being able to learn about the farm whilst enjoying a festive afternoon.



**Farmer milking the cows**



“

**Everything was so well organised and it was such a lovely event. It's particularly good for children to not only be able to sing carols in a relaxed setting, but also find out more about the cows and farming life. We loved the mulled drinks and food and the choir was brilliant! ... Overall, it was brilliant. Thank you!**

Carols in the Cowshed, 2023



**Carols in the Cowshed, Dec 2023**



## 4.2 Outcome 2: increasing knowledge

We also offered a free open day in September 2023 to celebrate the opening of our new Farm Gate and Milking Parlour Experience. We hosted 586 adults and children from the local and wider community. The day showcased our new Farm Gate and Milking Parlour Experience as well as encouraging visitors to explore the wider farmland on the new trails.

There was food and drinks, showcasing produce from our farm, as well as self-led information walks around the market garden to see where and how the organic vegetables are produced onsite. We also offered activities for children and guests could see our herd of cows, meet our new calves and ask questions directly to our farmer.



**Enjoying food and drink**



**Children's activities**

**“ We learnt about milking cows and an interesting form of composting [Bokashi].**

Food and Farming Open Day, October 2023

**“ The atmosphere of the event was very inviting, informal, allowing you to wander and explore and find out more. Nice to meet the greenwoodsmen [at Underwoodsmen Ltd] too and see the market garden on such a beautiful day, understand the milking process. Thank you so much for this opportunity.**

Food and Farming Open Day, October 2023



**Our milkable model cow**



**Children visiting the calves**

## 4.2 Outcome 2: increasing knowledge

### Volunteering programme

Over this two-year project, 84 volunteers engaged with our volunteering sessions, with 1536 days volunteered (approx. 6144 hours). The volunteering programme was designed to encourage people to take an interest in issues related to nature and the environment and 95% of volunteers surveyed across our groups (n=19) said they had improved their knowledge of food, farming or nature issues, whilst volunteering at Bore Place.

One of our volunteers told us he had gained improved “knowledge of wildlife, and nature conservation”, as well as, “knowledge of farming and the challenges of farming sustainability” (Robert B, 2024).

**95%** said volunteering at Bore Place has improved their knowledge of food, farming or nature issues

## 4.3 Outcome 3: increasing skills

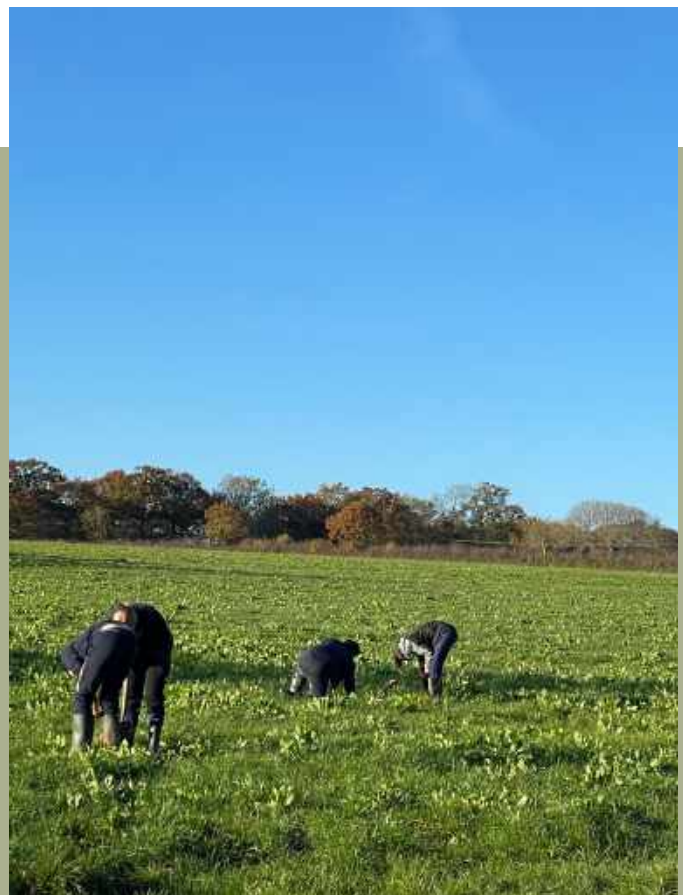
### Education programmes

Mid-programme reports from teachers (n=10) attending through our Local Schools Project indicate that 70% of teachers feel that the majority of their class has already learnt new skills through the programme, with several teachers commenting on their class learning new cookery skills during their visits. Other comments related to their class learning about how cows are milked and to identify edible plants.

Children and young people on all programmes have taken part in our citizen science programme, and learnt new skills to be able to undertake ecological surveys such as worm counts and hedgerow surveys during their visits.

**“The children have absolutely loved the experience and grown through the opportunities provided. The biggest growth has got to be passion for nature but also understanding of the world they live in but also share with many creatures and wildlife.**

Year 5 Teacher, Four Elms Primary



**Students carrying out a worm count**

### 4.3 Outcome 3: increasing skills

#### Volunteering programme

79% of volunteers surveyed (n=19) reported that they had increased their skills, giving examples such as how to sharpen tools, and how to build a hibernaculum.

#### Community events programme

Not all events delivered had a primary focus to develop skills, but still 58% of people surveyed (n=55) who attended an event reported that they learned new skills, such as how to use a bat detector and how to make yoghurt from milk.

**“ I have learnt some ways to survey how well the environment is supporting certain species of wildlife and i have learned a little about how partnership working is a solution for long term sustainability.**

Carol, Volunteer, 2024

**“ [The workshop was] So excellent, I have been making yoghurt ever since with great success!**

Event participant, Sept 2023



Volunteers working in the Courtyard Garden

## 4.4 Outcome 4: improving wellbeing

### Education programmes

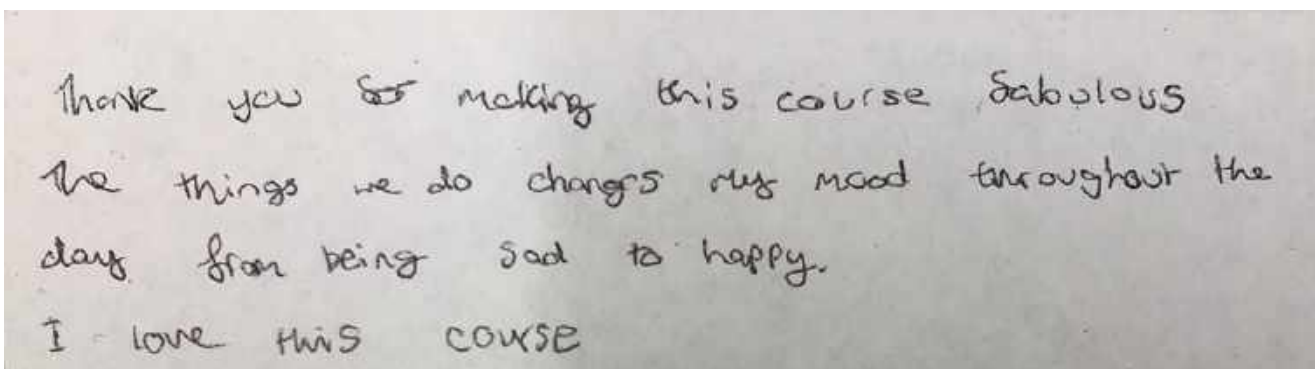
We asked three teachers of SEN students who visit on weekly programmes about observed wellbeing changes in their students. They all agreed that at least some of the students in their class were happier, more confident and more independent since starting their visits to Bore Place. Reports from teachers have highlighted that the weekly visits are beneficial for their students' wellbeing.

A teacher from Oakley School (2023-24) told us a highlight so far has been seeing "the sheer enjoyment on our pupils faces on a Tuesday when we see/hear the wildlife and scenery.", and a teacher from Marjorie McClure School (2023-24) said "We always notice that the students are much calmer/happier and relaxed after our Tuesday visits... [One of the best moments was] seeing a student overcome his fear of being close to the calves and actually being able to touch them with a smile on his face and no sign of anxiety."



**Young person learning outside**

Mid-programme reports from teachers (n=10) attending through our Local Schools Project show that the programme has been improving a range of wellbeing metrics in the children attending. 50% of teachers said that at least some of the children in their class were happier and more confident since coming on the Bore Place visits and 70% of teachers felt the visits were improving independence in the children attending.



**Arts Award student feedback, 2023**

## 4.4 Outcome 4: improving wellbeing

Children attending our Local Schools Project gave lots of positive responses about their visits:

- “ I loved going on a walk and going to see the calf. I didn't like the smell of the poo pit! - Year 4, Bidborough Primary
- “ I liked picking the apples - Year 3/4, Four Elms Primary
- “ I loved the calves and cows! - Year 6, Ide Hill Primary
- “ I liked it when we made apple cobbler - Year 3/4, Weald Primary School



Young people enjoy visiting Bore Place, and this feedback sheet is a lovely visual representation of the joy experienced on a day visit:



## 4.4 Outcome 4: improving wellbeing

### Volunteering programme

95% of volunteers who responded to our survey (n=19) said that volunteering had a positive impact on their social and mental wellbeing. It is interesting to note that the other 5% represents one volunteer who did not report a positive social impact from their role is a volunteer who works independently at Bore Place, rather than taking part in one of our group sessions. Volunteers mentioned teamwork, meeting new people and enjoying the social aspect of being part of the group.

**“ Working as part of a supportive team without any pressure is helping me to feel more confident and relaxed around others. Team working to complete a task is also providing a sense of purpose and achievement which is helping improve my self esteem.**

Carol; Volunteer, 2024

**“ I particularly like being physically active and working alongside others to complete a task. It provides exercise, camaraderie and a sense of purpose and achievement.**

Jane; Volunteer, 2024

**““ It helps me overcome loneliness. It gives me a sense of purpose, that I'm doing something for the benefit of others and the environment.**

Sue; Volunteer, 2024

**““ Being part of a team is really important to me. Over the past 9 years my husband who is also a volunteer has developed Young Onset Alzheimer's Disease - coming to Bore Place is really important for him and his continuity of life patterns and skills - Bore place teams from the office through to all the teaching staff and volunteers are totally supportive and inclusive. It is a real lifeline and highlight of our week.**

Mary; Volunteer, 2024



Volunteer group

## 4.5 Outcome 5: improving soft-/life-skills

### Education programmes

Developing soft- and life-skills is intrinsic to all our educational programmes. A number of the LASER Award units taken by our weekly visiting SEN students are directly linked to soft-skill development. In 2022-23 students undertook 'Independent Living', 'Basic Food Preparation and Cooking', and 'Developing Employability Skills Through Groupwork' units and achieved a 100% pass rate. Tutors reported that many of the students had never cooked before doing this course.

In 2023-24 students have been undertaking 'Living in the Community', 'Getting About Safely', 'Speaking and Listening at Work', 'Working as a Volunteer' and 'Group and Teamwork Communication Skills', all of which are designed to develop and assess soft- and life-skills. All student are on track to pass these units.

The new outdoor teaching areas, named The Oaks and The Hive, have increased the number and variety of spaces for young people to learn onsite. These outdoor classrooms are used regularly by both school and other groups, providing safe spaces to learn practical outdoor skills such as fire-lighting and den building, alongside developing soft-skills such as teamwork and communication in order to complete the tasks. The spaces are also used for social time, such as lunchtimes for school day visitors.

Students have been actively involved in restocking the Farm Gate, and have gained valuable work experience from this. Tutor reports have highlighted that a number of students who previously required staff support to complete tasks such as temperature checks and restocking, have been observed working together to confidently undertake these tasks without staff assistance.



**Developing cooking skills**



**Working together**



## 4.6 Outcome 6: inspiring behaviour

### Education programmes

The majority of teachers (85% of n=27) on day trips told us their visit to Bore Place had inspired them to provide more outdoor learning opportunities for their students. This is another survey question we changed part-way through the project, as we were concerned that negative answers may be due to schools already offering lots of outdoor education and not wishing to provide more. The one respondent who told us they did not feel inspired to offer more, may have opted to tell us they already feel they provide plenty of opportunities, had the option been available.

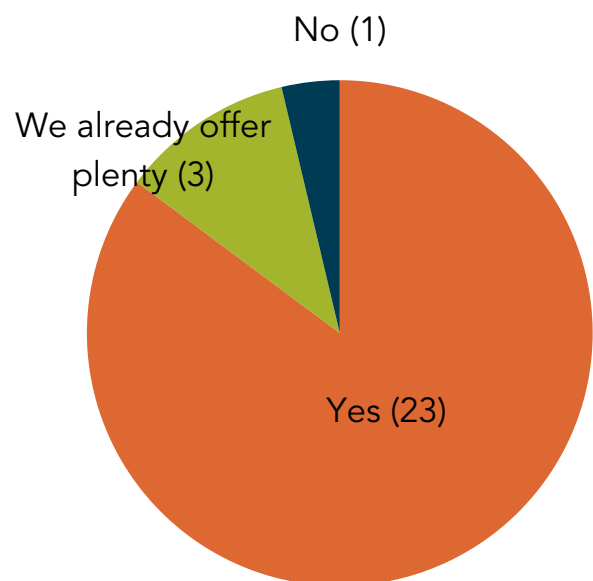
One teacher from Four Elms Primary School told us, "My class now have vast knowledge about bats and a keen interest in them too. A few have purchased their own bat detectors as they were inspired by the work of Bore Place."

### Volunteering programme

84% of volunteers asked (n=19) said that their volunteering experience had either inspired them to positively change their behaviour, or they were considering doing something differently, in terms of caring for the environment. It is important to note that two volunteers (11%) felt they were already doing their bit, meaning only one volunteer (5%) doesn't feel inspired to try any new pro-environmental behaviours.

Behaviour changes included making dead hedges, leaving some areas unmown, creating log piles and leaving seed heads over winter.

### Has your visit inspired you to provide more outdoor learning opportunities for your students?



## 4.6 Outcome 6: inspiring behaviour

### Community events programme

Part-way through the project, we were surprised that around a third of visitors who took part in our community events programme (n=47; people surveyed) said they did not want to do more to help the environment after attending an event. However, we noticed that many respondents qualified their negative answer with positive comments such as, "I already try to do my bit" and "I already care for the environment". This prompted us to revise the answer options for this question, and we found that across the responses from both versions of the question (n=102), the positive responses remained the same, with 67% of people either wanting to, or considering, positively changing their behaviour. Of those who answered the revised question (n=55), 29% said that, whilst they don't intend to do more, they already feel they 'do their bit', and only 4% were not interested in doing anything differently.

Responses included making more bird- and bat-friendly environments, leaving more nettles, putting up bat boxes and planting more pollinator friendly plants. A couple of people also said they felt inspired to buy a bat detector.

**“ [I will] encourage others to eat more healthily and think about farming techniques**

Participant; Labneh and paneer making workshop, 2023

**“ I am hoping to participate in butterfly monitoring**

Attendee; Bug Hunt, August 2023

“

**I think the visit consolidated my view on food and food miles, we have our own small garden and grow some veg and fruit, makes me think this is a right approach. I was impressed with the whole disposition to sustainability and something I am trying to live by.**

Visitor; Food and Farming Open Day, September 2023



# 5 Learning and development for the future

- We will create a schedule for habitat assessments and species monitoring. Following the work we have undertaken to understand the condition of the habitats we have on site and the abundance and diversity of species, we have been able to target our efforts and create a schedule for all future survey work. Our species efforts will focus on the 6 indicators we have identified, allowing us to expand our approach to other sites and farms in the local area, to more easily compare the data collected on species over time and across different sites. We will also undertake regular habitat surveys, using drones, and by using the DEFRA condition assessments used by the Biodiversity Net Gain system, to show expansion and improvement in the habitats on site over time.
- We will create a more structured feedback survey schedule to improve response rate.
- We will include a question in our community events feedback form asking if guests have visited Bore Place before, to gain a better understanding of our reach to new guests.
- We will improve methods for assessing improvements in soft-/life-skills made by young people.
- We will gather more data from children on day visits relating to their experience and knowledge gained in order to gain a better understanding of our impact from the children's perspective.

# 6 Additional outcomes and recommendations

As a result of the success of the Farm Gate and the vending machine already installed in this area, we will be putting in place a new milk vending machine. This will allow members of the public to be closer to the process of the dairy farm, and to refill their own glass bottles with fresh milk, creating less waste and minimising food miles. It will also allow members of staff and those staying at Bore Place to have easy access to the milk produced on site.

We will continue to record our indicator species and have honed our approach to recording species on site with a new citizen science programme for 2024, allowing us to expand our reach of undertaking these surveys in neighbouring farms as part of the farm cluster. It has also given us a framework to recruit specific survey volunteers through our citizen science programme and we hope to use this to expand our volunteer numbers and create more opportunities for people to engage with and learn about nature.

As part of the continuation of the work of the Farm cluster, in partnership with South East Rivers Trust and SES Water, funding has been secured to recruit someone to act as the facilitator for the cluster. They will be supporting and guiding the work of the cluster, establishing long term funding, and creating a long-term plan in collaboration with the farmer led steering group and Bore Place staff.

In light of the success of our Food and Farming Open Day in 2023, we plan to deliver two larger-scale open days annually for approx. 600-1000 guests in total. We also plan to continue offering Carols in the Cowshed annually at Christmas for 125 guests, building on its success and continuing to partner with community groups. We recognise that these larger events are important for expanding our reach and encouraging new guests to visit.

The delivery of the events programme has highlighted that we need a more concentrated approach to marketing opportunities for the public. As such, we plan to broaden our social media reach over the coming months and years.

# 7 References

- [1] [Rebanks, J.](#) (2021) *English Pastoral: An Inheritance*. Penguin Books. Dublin.
- [2] [Almond, R.E.A.](#), [Grooten, M.](#), [Juffe Bignoli, D.](#) & [Petersen, T.](#) (Eds). WWF, Gland, Switzerland (2022) *Living Planet Report 2022 - Building a nature-positive society*. WWF [https://wwflpr.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/lpr\\_2022\\_full\\_report\\_1.pdf](https://wwflpr.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/lpr_2022_full_report_1.pdf)
- [3] [Hayhow DB](#), [Eaton MA](#), [Stanbury AJ](#), [Burns F](#), [Kirby WB](#), [Bailey N](#), [Beckmann B](#), [Bedford J](#), [Boersch-Supan PH](#), [Coomber F](#), [Dennis EB](#), [Dolman SJ](#), [Dunn E](#), [Hall J](#), [Harrower C](#), [Hatfield JH](#), [Hawley J](#), [Haysom K](#), [Hughes J](#), [Johns DG](#), [Mathews F](#), [McQuatters-Gollop A](#), [Noble DG](#), [Outhwaite CL](#), [Pearce-Higgins JW](#), [Pescott OL](#), [Powney GD](#) and [Symes N](#) (2019) *The State of Nature 2019*. The State of Nature partnership. <https://nbn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/State-of-Nature-2019-UK-full-report.pdf>
- [4] [Tinsley-Marshall, P.](#), [Skilbeck, A.](#), [Drake, C.](#) [Edwards, C.](#), [Allen, G.](#), [Atkinson, K.](#), [Baker, J.](#), [Ball, L.](#), [Bauer, K.](#), [Beale, S.](#), [Bleet, R.](#), [Bloor, R.](#), [Breeze, L.](#), [Britton-Williams, N.](#), [Buckingham, S.](#), [Butler, M.](#), [Clemons, L.](#), [Colver, E.](#), [Easterbrook, M.](#), [Fitzmaurice, A.](#), [Griffiths, A.](#), [Hadaway, P.](#), [Harding, R.](#), [Hazlehurst, G.](#), [Hayes, M.](#), [Heath, M.](#), [Hedley, S.](#), [Henderson, A.](#), [Hewitt, K.](#), [Hodges, R.](#), [Howard, R.](#), [Hunt, J.](#), [Hunter, I.](#), [Johnson, A.](#), [Kitchener, G.](#), [Mason-Baldwin, L.](#), [Moxey, T.](#), [Orchard, M.](#), [Parr, A.](#), [Pateman, B.](#), [Peckham, S.](#), [Phillips, M.](#), [Rainey, M.](#), [Reid, H.](#), [Russell-Smith, T.](#), [Ruyter, A.](#), [Shaw, I.](#), [Shenton, D.](#), [Simmons, H.](#), [Smith, H.](#), [Smith, S.](#), [Still, R.](#), [Swinnerton, K.](#), [Taylor, P.](#), [Thompson, S.](#), [Tittley, I.](#), [Tuson, D.](#), [Walker, D.](#), [Weeks, S.](#), [Witts, T.](#), & [Young, J.](#) (2022) *The State of Nature in Kent 2021*. Kent Nature Partnership. <https://kentnature.org.uk/state-of-nature/>
- [5] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/agriculture-in-the-united-kingdom-2022/summary>

## Photo credits

Grateful thanks to staff and volunteers for sharing their photos to be used in this report.

# 8 Partners

The Trust contracted the Centre for Education and Youth (CfEY) to continue to provide training and support to further improve our evaluation framework and evaluate outcomes drawing on survey data from community event participants, school teachers and students, and volunteers, combining both quantitative and qualitative data.



Partnering with the Big Give Green Match Fund enabled us to generate additional funding to support our Local Schools Programme. This programme created 72 day visits for years 4, 5 and 6 from six local primary schools to visit multiple times through the academic year.







Chiddingstone  
Kent  
TN8 7AR  
01732 463255  
[www.boreplace.org](http://www.boreplace.org)

Home of the Commonwork Trust registered charity 1160725 &  
Commonwork Organic Farms Ltd. registered company 1977080