

Larkrise Community Farm AGM  
Chair Report  
13-10-2021

Another year has passed with the effects of Covid-19 still happening all around us. Despite being a very difficult and somewhat unpredictable time, I would like to focus on the positives that have come out of this year, as we have certainly all experienced enough of the negatives!

Most importantly, as a charity and as a community service: we are still standing, and we are still financially secure.

Since that first lockdown when we temporarily mothballed the farm, put the majority of staff on furlough, and were unable to have any students at the farm, things have changed. As the virus and lockdown evolved we were able to bring staff back off furlough gradually and welcome students back at the farm once again.

The commencement of our fantastic vaccination programme provided huge relief to all. Although we did not change the way we operated within the Covid-19 guidelines or change the way we kept our people safe, the vaccination programme offered a pathway back to normality that was much needed.

I'm delighted and proud to say that all members of our staff opted for vaccination against the virus, in order to best protect themselves, their friends and families, and everyone at the farm.

Thanks to a series of grants, home learning programmes, the incredibly generous government furlough scheme, excellent Covid-19 planning for students returning, and some lucky investments over the years, we have managed to finish the year's accounts in surplus, which is an incredible feat in itself and one we should all be very proud of.

We have also managed to retain all of our staff, something that weighed particularly heavily on me at the start of the pandemic and I am immensely proud that we have managed to retain jobs for all at the farm.

We have already made a start on reintroducing RDA lessons at Larkrise Community Farm and have a number of exciting projects planned such as carrying out much-needed maintenance and introducing the highly anticipated beekeeping provision for students in addition to their current outdoor learning. We have discussed ways of helping the wider community access our services virtually while we remain closed to general public so that we can still be of service to our local families.

I cannot speak highly enough of our staff and volunteers for what they have endured and sustained since the start of the pandemic. From natural worries over their jobs and the outcome of furlough leave right at the start of the lockdowns, to professional worries about maintaining social distance and adhering to hand hygiene once we were all back at the farm, our staff have been fantastic and we are truly so very lucky to have such a great team at the farm.

Thanks must go to Wendy and Ashley, our managers, who have helped make the workplace safe, orderly and also fun, thank you all your hard work and long hours, and for putting so much of your identities into the making of the farm and for supporting the farm through a transitional period of historic proportions.

Thank you also to the Trustees for their help and support during really challenging times, I personally have really needed that help and support and I really do appreciate it from the bottom of my heart.

I would like to say a special thanks to Rob, who as well as being Vice Chair, found himself in the unenviable role of Health & Safety Trustee when we were hit by the pandemic! Thanks to Rob's endless hours of research and work, and tireless revisions and scanning of ever changing government guidelines, we have been able to remain 'Covid free', so far, at the farm, and for him drumming it into our staff about the importance of sticking to his risk assessment me like glue and being sure they can ask him anytime for clarification of the rules and regulations if they needed to. Rob has been a real driving force of research and typing up countless documents for the health and benefit of all at the farm. Thank you Rob, on everyone's behalf, for your amazing contribution to Larkrise Community Farm during Covid-19.

Now we move onto the re election of the Trustees.