



Annual Report 2023/24

Chair of Management Committee

Angela Raffle

Management Committee Members

Claire Bloor

Jason Craig

Maddie Dunn (resigned February 2024)

Selena Gray

Rachel Hammond (appointed November 2023)

Naomi Kent (appointed November 2023)

Masuyo Newman

Ben Newton

Annie Price

Phoebe Ruxton (appointed November 2023)

David Whittaker

Emily Wilson (resigned July 2023)

Key Personnel

Managing DirectorKim BrooksFinance ManagerJulian GrenFood and Farming ManagerJohn Miller

Growers Nick Haigh, Will Warin & Harley Wright

Communications & Fundraising ManagerTom RichardsonCustomer Services AdvisorSally PurnellCommunities & Partnerships ManagerDaisy SutcliffeWarehouse ManagerAtanas Sharkov

Contents

An introduction from the Chair of our Management Committee	1
Farming	3
Food	6
Communities	7
Wildlife	11
The Community Farm in numbers	13
Financial Report for the Annual Accounts 2023/24	15

Please note: The Financial Report provides an overview only. Detailed audited accounts are available via our website.

An Introduction from the Chair of our Management Committee

As always, this has been an exciting year in the life of the Farm, with much learning, many challenges, and steady progress. The 2023/24 year began, on 7 April, with a celebration for Kim's (our Managing Director) last day before maternity leave. For this reason, we do not have our usual Managing Director's section in the report, as her team were covering for her whilst she became a happily proud mother!

Kim and her team had prepared carefully for our time without her. The wise decision was made that the drawbacks of bringing in temporary cover outweighed any potential benefits. The staff rose ably to the challenge, supported by mentorship from management committee members and leadership training provided by Jenny Mackewn. Important learning and development took place. We have increased our resilience in practical and operational matters by developing stronger crosscover. We have become more flexible and adaptable around roles, responsibilities and communications. Since Kim's return (on fewer hours) in February she has been able to focus on forward-looking thinking and complex problem solving, confident that day-to-day operations are all well held.

Our focus on both Food and Farming has been stronger than ever before, led by John our Food and Farming Manager and supported by management committee members Jason - with a wealth of experience in the food world, and Rachel - with a wealth of experience in small-scale, agroecological farming. It has been wonderful to see this further evolution in our range of expertise as the Farm has grown.

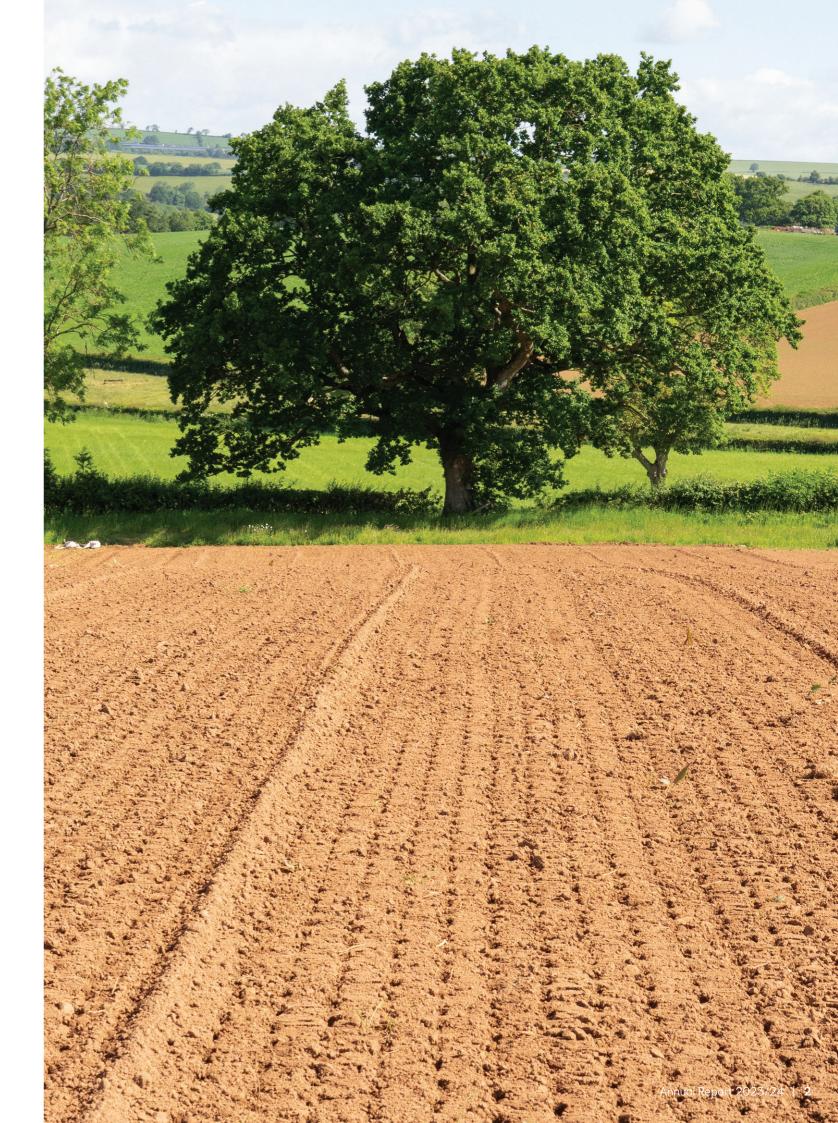
The financial figures reflect a year of good performance, together with important investment in our staff, our website and our communications. The result is a small and not unexpected financial deficit of £9,000 at year end, and a team that is well placed to take us steadfastly into the next chapter in the life of the Farm.

I am also very happy to say that Ben Newton, who has served on the management committee since 2019, will be taking over the role of Chair at our AGM in November 2024. This change was approved by the management committee last winter, and Ben, a keen supporter of the natural world with a wealth of business experience in both commercial and non-profit sectors, has been working closely with the senior staff to prepare. I am looking forward to having more time to do practical volunteering, and will stay on as Secretary for the coming year. So all that remains is for me to thank everyone - paid and unpaid workers, funders, customers, supporters and friends – all of whom are integral to enabling this project (described by a local schoolteacher as "heaven on earth") to thrive

Dr Angela E Raffle

Chair of the Management Committee

"I love the whole ethos of TCF, the people, the achievements, the atmosphere are brilliant. Viva TCFIII Field Volunteer



Farming

We embraced a period of intense learning and adaptation this year, embedding a new team structure while responding to another season of extraordinarily challenging growing conditions.

Fluctuating and extreme weather patterns resulted in below-forecast yields for a number of important crops. Seed germination was impeded by a wet, cold spring, and the long drought that followed turned the earth in the waterlogged fields into concrete-like balls. Cultivating the fine tilth needed for planting proved almost impossible. The summer that followed provided little respite and was characterised by rain and below-average temperatures.

This was our first full season for the new team, with the three Growers each taking a lead on two aspects of farming operations and collaborating to bring together their crop plans to form a coherent whole-farm plan.

Heading into 2024, the Growers set out with a clear sense of purpose, having agreed their key aims for the year:

- increase TCF's share of the produce that goes into the veg boxes
- grow a diverse range of crops, suitable for veg boxes throughout the year
- introduce early and late-cropping varieties to extend the season
- trial overwintering brassica crops in the field and market garden
- boost polytunnel production by increasing the supply of winter salad and leafy greens, introducing aubergines and growing more "shoulder-season" crops like beetroot, lettuce, sugar-snap peas and salad onions
- lengthen beds to utilise all available growing areas

A focus on continuous production of salads (summer and winter crops) combined with increased demand from wholesale customers, particularly restaurants, resulted in salad sales of £11,694, up 92% on last year. Overall however, field transfers (crops from our field, valued at market wholesale price) for the year were 12% below forecast, at £82,992.

The wettest March on record delayed ploughing, and the squash then struggled to germinate after direct-sowing. Despite our efforts to mitigate this with plug plants, we saw a 41% drop compared to last year's yield with total Cucurbit sales of £15,200. This year's leeks were smaller than usual, having been slow to develop in the polytunnels before planting out, resulting in a yield almost 900kg below forecast. Our apples, too, had a disappointing year, raising less than £1,000, with eaters down 81% on last year at 500kg and just over 400 bottles of juice, compared to more than 1,200 in 2022. Although the weather will have been a factor, it is possible the trees are biennial-bearing.

Sales of Brassicas were £3,800 below forecast at £19,100; Alliums reached just over £8,000, as did spinach and chard, which loved the growing conditions and came in £5,000 above forecast. Tomatoes also performed better than last year, yielding 1,350kg and generating sales of £4,900.

The sharing out of lead roles was as follows; Will Warin - field-scale growing and irrigation, Harley Wright - polytunnels and apples, Nick Haigh - market garden and propagation. And our Seasonal Field Workers, from May to October, were Mikael Popov and Bex Tyres.



A grant from the Farming In Protected Landscapes (FiPL) fund meant we could go ahead with the polytunnel project, which had been in the pipeline for a few years. Once planning approval was confirmed, the tunnel was erected in January. However, poor drainage during the extremely wet spring prevented us from producing an early crop before the tomatoes went in. Our first planting of lettuce was blighted by leatherjackets (crane fly larvae), who thrived on this waterlogged area of land.

The impact of water-logging in this previously uncultivated soil demonstrates the link between soil health and farm resilience. By rotating crops, using green manures, composting more and digging less, we're creating conditions in our cultivated areas for roots, worms and beneficial microbes to flourish. Farming in this way restores the soil's vitality and structure, and the farm's resilience to extreme weather.







Food

Our objective this year was to move towards becoming a "one-stop weekly shop" for our customers, trying out new product lines from local suppliers, much to the delight of our staff and volunteers, who have been called upon to help with sampling.

We launched 30 new products in 2023/24, generating an additional £10,000 in sales income. Coffee, cheeses, natural yoghurt, kefir and tofu are among the most popular additions. With the launch of sourdough bread in May 24, we've seen further increases to our customer average spend and plan to refine and grow our product offering over the coming months.

We worked with 33 South West growers and producers to provide quality local produce to our customers. 44% of all the food we bought in was from the South West and 14% came directly from our fields.

Sales over the Christmas period were up on last year, with seasonal products such as meat, cheese, nut roasts and clementine boxes proving very popular and contributing an increase in average spend. Through the generosity of our amazing customers, we raised £1,500 for local charity, Caring in Bristol, and our annual Christmas hamper initiative with partner organisation, Families in Focus, saw fresh, local organic produce being delivered to 210 households in need.

With a grant of £35,000 from the Household Support Fund, we launched Go Organic, a new initiative to make local, organic food more accessible by subsidising the cost of a veg box for participating households by 50%. By year end, 30 households were benefitting from the scheme.

> "Just wanted to say how wonderful the boxes are. The quality and variety are perfect. The one vegetable I haven't used yet is the little squash, but I love it hanging out in the kitchen with me for now ... it's beautiful."



Communities

A major three-year grant from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation commenced in May 2023; a welcome vote of confidence that provides a crucial contribution to the whole Communities Programme and firm foundations for further development. Additional funding was also gratefully received from the "Farming in Protected Landscapes" fund and Quartet Express fund, aided by the creation of the new post of Fundraiser.

We continue to strive towards an ever richer and more inclusive Communities Programme, this year consolidating and strengthening each of the five distinct but interconnected strands:

- Volunteering
- **Growing Wellbeing** (supported by EcoWild)
- Schools (supported by Earthwise)
- Targeted outreach with community partners
- Events

Volunteering

Since the farm's earliest days, volunteers have been at its heart; attending to the wellbeing of our local and global communities by coming together to grow and distribute food, to nurture and be nurtured by the land. 115 people took part in our regular weekday volunteering sessions, helping to sow, weed, plant, harvest and pack our crops and prepare, maintain and improve the land for both crops and wildlife. Community Farmer Days took place on 18 Saturdays during the growing season, involving 191 adults and 61 under-18's.



Wildlife volunteers met on 31 occasions to carry out surveys of pollinator populations. And our volunteer management committee members have worked behind the scenes to support the staff and ensure good governance. The flexibility of our volunteering is one of its attractions, with some volunteers here twice-weekly, others ad hoc - plus a "rolling" pool of less frequent attendees.



The farm is a very special place and I really enjoy volunteering because of the friendly folk and great work that everyone does. It does my heart good." Volunteer 2023

Growing Wellbeing

Supported by our long-term delivery partner EcoWild, who bring a wealth of expertise, knowledge and networks, Growing Wellbeing comprises three strands; Grow and Make, Wild Steps, and EcoWild's own Lakeside Wellbeing. Supplemental Grow Days and Wild Days allow former students to 'top-up' their wellbeing, and prospective participants to get a taste before deciding whether to commit to a full course. This year we also added EcoWild Days to our programme.

30 people attended Grow and Make across three courses, developing and maintaining the raised beds and Forest Garden in our learning area and growing some wonderful flowers and food, whilst healing from mental health challenges, grief, and long term health conditions.

"I love it. Such a wonderful thing to do each week, it's the highlight of my week. A space to reset, socialise and learn new skills.

Grow and Make participant, 2024.

17 people took part in Wild Steps over 19 sessions, looking after our wildlife borders, margins, hedgerows and pond, encouraging wildlife to share in The Farm's bounty and finding solace amongst the wild lives that we share the land with.

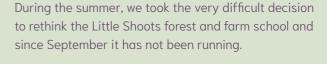
18 sessions of Lakeside Wellbeing supported 36 participants, all struggling with mental health issues and finding respite and strength from connecting to the farm, to other people and from exploring self awareness.



Schools

Visits from local primary and secondary school children feature frequently in our calendar, bringing a bubbling energy that ripples through the whole farm.

This year, 18 educational sessions were provided for 407 school children by our delivery partner, Earthwise, whose knowledge of TCF, schools and the National Curriculum are invaluable. Earthwise largely works with primary schools, offering practical sessions exploring the connections between food, farming, health and climate science to supplement their key stage 2 provision. These sessions remain very popular with great feedback from teachers and students alike.



In the spring, the building of a new multi-station hand wash area for school groups marked five years' work to make our outdoor learning area more welcoming, accessible and versatile. We're grateful to Nineveh Foundation, Quartet Recovery Fund, Awards for All, The People's Project and Nisbet Trust, whose combined grants contributed approximately £78,000 towards the work. The improved infrastructure means we can accommodate more visitors and provide for a wider range of ages and abilities.







"The kids were buzzing when we arrived back!! They were excited to take their veg home ... You really have instilled a passion for food within these young people!! Some say it's their favourite subject by far. I love to see how connecting fresh air/ breathing/ beauty/ food and friendship and doing things together is!! It was a glimpse of theaven on earth - thank you!!!... It has enabled classroom based learning to come to life and given the students an extremely valuable experience of the outdoors and real life farming and all it entails."

Targeted Outreach with Community Partners

(Funded by Farming in Protected Landscapes)

The farming sector is one of the least diverse in the UK; a situation we are committed to addressing as we strive to achieve a more equitable model for food and farming. Funding from FiPL and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation has allowed us to strengthen the partnerships we have cultivated with local, community-based support organisations, enabling marginalised people to access The Farm and through it the food, farming and conservation sectors.

Groundwork South's IMPACT project - working with refugees and migrants from outside of the EU to support their integration into the UK - brought 43 people to visit the farm over the course of six weeks. Through AidBox Community, we welcomed 53 refugees and people seeking asylum over seven sessions. Square Food Foundation (SFF) attended on six occasions with 76 people in total, mostly young people not in education or employment participating in SFF's its How To Be A Chef programme, as well as older people at risk of isolation and loneliness. Over three sessions, five young people visited the farm with Bristol Future Talent Partnership, who are seeking to overcome barriers to employment arising from inequality and racial discrimination.



The farm is a thriving community in a delightful environment. People of all ages, ethnicity, faiths work together in a happy, fulfilling atmosphere. Field Volunteer





Events

Special events including Owl Prowls, birdsong walks, basketweaving and foraging workshops continue to prove popular. The Wassail - a traditional winter ceremony to honour the land and bless the harvest to come - was also very well attended. We have also seen an increase in the number of local people hiring our venues, demonstrating the value of this unique and special piece of land to our community.







Chew Valley School Teacher, 2023





Wildlife

April 2023 brought that familiar excitement that always accompanies the arrival of spring. Many of our winter visitors had long-since headed south, and new arrivals were making their presence felt. Hearing the chiffchaffs and blackcaps, we wondered if they had just arrived or if they had decided to overwinter here, as many now do. We keenly awaited the swallows and swifts, sometimes accompanied by their predator, the hobby. It's an anxious time, as we know that numbers of these birds are in serious decline and we are seeing fewer here above the farm.

The start of May saw the launch of a new project – weekly surveying of butterflies. Every week throughout the summer, on the sunniest day, volunteers recorded butterflies over the course of an hour, following a set route around the farm, modelled on the farm's long-standing BeeWalk. Having started in May with one unidentified butterfly, we witnessed the population growing to as many as 242 individuals spotted in 1 hour, at the height of the season in July. 21 species were recorded in total.

Bumblebee numbers held up, despite fears of the impact of the 2022 heatwave, with 92 recorded on the monthly count in August, compared with the previous year's high of 67. Off went the results to the national database. During the nine-month survey period, we recorded seven species of bumblebee. Sadly other less common UK bumblebee species still face the risk of extinction.

Whilst an ecologist's survey in summer 2023 found no reliable evidence of dormice nesting in our hedgerows, wood mice and shrews were amongst the small mammals spotted on the land. We hope to continue the dormouse observations in 2024. Our badger sett was surveyed this year as previous years and the entrances noted to be in regular use. Many thanks to the Somerset Badger Group for their on-going support and expertise.

Winter surveys included a farmland bird count and the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch, with 12 species recorded. In summer 2023 tawny owls were filmed nesting in our owl box along the north hedge and the fledglings were spotted 'branching,' ie. balancing and flapping. A barn owl chick nesting in a box in a neighbouring field had to be rescued after falling from the nest. After establishing that it could not safely be put back, staff called in the Hawk and Owl Trust and the chick was taken to The Bird of Prey Project at Newton St Loe where it was nursed back to health and later rehomed in the wild – with owl foster parents!

The pond has become well-established, with extra dogwood and willow trees planted along the edges. Any bugs seeking accommodation will have been pleased to encounter the impressive new bug hotel beside the Veg Shed, created by an enthusiastic group on their corporate team away day.

Farming practices here are informed by learning from the careful observations of volunteers and staff. As a result, many more flowers are now seeded around the crop areas and hedge margins, to encourage both pollinators and pest predators. The hedges themselves are carefully laid, cut and maintained on a rotational basis, with volunteers and staff honing their scything and hedge laying skills. spring 2024 saw the north hedge laid by a large team of staff, field volunteers and Wild Steps volunteers. Volunteers also supported Council for Protection of Rural England in planting a new native hedgerow in a neighbour's field.

Dominant plants like brambles, nettles and ivy continue to be carefully managed, allowing space for some to develop as wonderful sources of shelter and food for all sorts of beneficial species.



The Community Farm 2023/24 in numbers













29 VISITING GROUPS FROM UNDER-REPRESENTED COMMUNITIES



28,000 LEEKS HARVESTED













Annual Report 2023/24

Financial Report for the Annual Accounts 2023/24

After the previous turbulent year, The Community Farm experienced a steadier financial year, ending in a small net loss of £9,000 compared to the surplus of £47,000 in prior year.

The Farm's underlying financial position has declined in line with the profit, being a net asset position of £96,000 compared with £105,000 in the previous year.

Summary Financial Statement of Income and Expenditure [1]

The final statement of income and expenditure is summarised in Table 1:

Table 1: Key financial indicators	2023/24 £'000	2022/23 £'000
Turnover	1,005	946
Cost of sales	(520)	(487)
Gross Profit	485	460
Gross Profit Margin	48%	49%
Administrative expenses	(664)	(557)
Surplus/(loss) on Society Trading	(179)	(97)
Grants and donations	171	144
Operating Profit/(loss)	(8)	47
Interest and similar items	(1)	(0)
Surplus/(loss)	(9)	47

Turnover

Turnover increased by 6% compared with the previous year, driven by an increase in both household "Veg Box" customer sales (an increase of £39,000 (6%) on previous year) and wholesale (an increase of £19,000 (8%) on previous year). Investment in our website and communications increased average household customer spend by £2.02 per week.

The analysis of turnover is set out in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Turnover	2023/24 £'000	2022/23 £'000	Percentage Change
Box Sales	709	671	6%
Wholesale	258	239	8%
Markets/Veg Shed	15	13	15%
Other Turnover	22	24	-5%
Total Sales	1,005	946	6%

Key Drivers of Financial Performance in 2023/2024

The "Loss on society trading" includes the costs for grant-funded activities, whereas the "grants and donations" income sits below this line. The increase in loss on society trading from £97,000 to £179,000 was only partly offset by an increase in grants and donations from £144,000 to £177,000.

The Cost-of-Living crisis and its impact dominated the previous financial year. This financial year the effects of that were still rippling through the industry. The Community Farm made some key financial decisions to remain steady despite these difficult conditions:

- Spend on Communications and Marketing was increased by £20,000. In the previous year, The Community Farm
 purposefully spent very little in this area, with that year being dominated by our "Stand With Us" campaign –
 a low cash cost, high energy initiative supported by our community of staff and volunteers. This crisis response
 cannot be maintained. In 2023-24 marketing spend was increased to allow for a successful autumn campaign
 to recruit new household customers, plus investment in our website and communications staff team.
- Payroll costs increased by £55,000. The Farm continued to honour its commitment to meet the Living Wage
 Foundation guidelines by increasing wages in January 2024 by 10% for the second year running. The recruitment
 freeze in 2022/23 artificially lowered payroll costs for that period, and recruitment was needed to replace roles.
 New roles were also created to improve our Communications and Fundraising efforts: we welcomed Sam as
 Content Creator and Kate as Fundraiser.

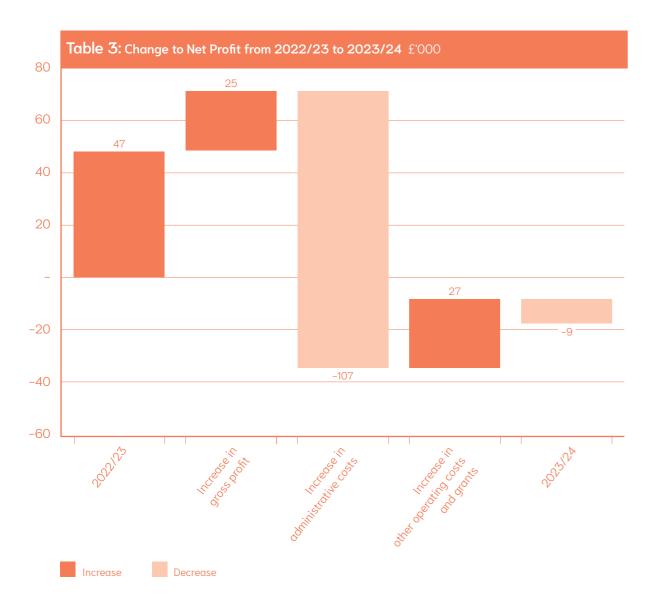
15 | Annual Report 2023/24 | **16**

^[1] See the Detailed Income Statement on Page 19 of the Accounts

This investment in our people and communications meant overall, when taking donations and net grants into account, the current year's operating performance declined by £55,000 versus 2022/2023. This decline should be viewed in the context of two very difficult years when many organic food and farming, and many community, businesses have not survived the difficult conditions experienced by these industries.

The overall movement in the position is analysed in Table 3:

Table 3: Financial Performance in 2023-24 compared to previous year



Donations

The Community Farm's Community Fund received £8,000 (2022/23: £6,000) from generous customers which was partially spent during the year providing food to local community projects. A balance of £1,000 will be carried forward to the following year.

£7,000 was received in donations from local residents at an event generously hosted on behalf of The Farm by Yeo Valley.

£1,500 was received from Veg Box customers for donating fresh produce to Caring at Bristol, a charity feeding people suffering from homelessness over the Christmas period.

Grants

Included in The Farm's income (Table 1), Net Grants of £10,000 were invested in a polytunnel for the farming operation. Because this amount was invested in an asset, the cost is not charged to expenditure within the same financial period.

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

£106,000 was awarded in the year for spend on our community programme which invites people to The Farm to learn about food, farming and wildlife and improve wellbeing. £16,000 will be carried forward for spend in the following year. This is the first year of a three-year grant of £200,000.

Quartet Community Foundation

£3,000 was carried forward from the previous year and an additional £2,000 received during the year. £4,000 was spent in the year on transport for participants of our Growing Wellbeing community programme. £1,000 will be carried forward for spend in the following year.

Farming in Protected Landscapes

£18,000 was awarded in the year for running activities to support wildlife on the farm with five community organisations. £3,000 will be carried forward for spend in the following year.

£11,000 was awarded in the year to be spent on a polytunnel. £1,000 will be carried forward for spend in the following year.

The Monica Fund

There was no spend from this fund during the year. £12,000 will be carried forward for spending in future years.

Real Farming Trust

£9,000 was received and spent in the year on wages and other costs to run our Communities programme for one month. An additional £49,000 five-year loan was awarded by the Real Farming Trust to invest in our food and farming operations for improved efficiency and performance.

Feeding Bristol

£35,000 was received to fund subsidised Veg Boxes for customers facing financial barriers. £4,000 was spent in the year and £31,000 will be carried forward for spend in the following year.

17 | Annual Report 2023/24 | 18

Overall financial health

A summary Balance Sheet is set out below (Table 4) for the year ended 24th of March 2024 (prior year to 27th March 2023) (Difference to financial statements due to rounding):

Table 4: Balance Sheet	2024 £'000	2023 £'000
Intangible	4	5
Tangible	68	68
Total Fixed Assets	72	73

Stock	10	10
Debtors	48	71
Cash	184	69
Total Current Assets	242	150

Creditors: due within one year	176	118
Net Current Assets / (Liabilities)	66	32

Total Assets less current liabilities	138	105
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year	42	
Net Assets / (Liabilities)	96	105

The net assets of The Farm decreased to £96,000 from £105,000 in the prior year. This has been driven principally by a reduction in working capital - a decrease in debtors and increase in creditors. The five-year loan from Real Farming Trust created a long term liability improving net current assets.

The Farm has net current assets of £66,000 at the end of the year. The balance of £12,000 in the Monica Fund is held as a liability, however this can be used at management discretion for operating costs or investment.

Conclusion

Whilst a small loss of £9,000 was suffered in the financial year, in the context of our combined industries of organic food and farming and community business, The Community Farm has shown incredible financial resilience. The previous financial year ended in a surplus, but it was unstable, unsustainable and a result of working in "crisis mode" for several months. This year's small loss represents stable and bold investment in our people and communications, and the reward of long-term thinking to build our income from donations and grant income.

As in previous years, donations and grant funding remain an essential part of the funding strategy for The Farm to continue to deliver social and environmental value through our community farming, wildlife activities and communities programmes. Growth in our grants and donations recognise the increased focus in this area of work.

We would like to thank all our donors, supporters and loyal customers for their continued support as The Farm continues to offer our community the opportunity to be part of an organic farm and food system that is benefitting local people and wildlife.

19 | Annual Report 2023/24 | 20



(a) @thecommunityfarm

e farming@thecommunityfarm.co.uk

www.thecommunityfarm.com

f @TheCommunityFarm

Denny Lane

Chew Magna

BS40 8SZ