

Ecological Land Cooperative

For a living, working countryside

Delivering low impact
living in rural areas

Vision



We want to see a living, working countryside where land is valued as a way to enhance the good of community, countryside and the natural world.

Mission

- **We create clusters of residential, ecologically managed small-scale farms** that are affordable, low impact and co-operative.
- **We demonstrate that low grade agricultural land can be improved** using organic principles to support the production of good, healthy, local food and enhance biodiversity.
- **ELC's land is protected in perpetuity for agro-ecological use** and we are growing the ELC so that it becomes self-sustaining for future generations.
- **We undertake research** to provide evidence of the benefits of low impact, ecological agriculture for the natural environment
- **We campaign for policy change** that encourages low impact development for sustainable food production, land stewardship and rural, land-based livelihoods.

Co-operation



- We are a Community Benefit Society registered with the FCA.
- Our Board of Directors is elected by our membership at our AGM.
- We currently have 288 members: 257 investors, 24 stewards and 7 workers.
- Our co-operative rules reflect our values and inform the way we work.
- These values include participation, promoting diversity, empowerment, localism, sustainability and creating a common wealth.
- We're committed to building strong, co-operative relationships with all those who have an interest in what we do.

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Model

- We raise capital through ethical investment, community shares and other fundraising
- Purchase land
- Design cluster of residential smallholdings
- Obtain planning permission
- Pass on only costs, rather than uplift gained from planning permission
- Seek relevant grant funding to keep costs down
- Recruit smallholders
- Design ecological management plans
- Monitor sites

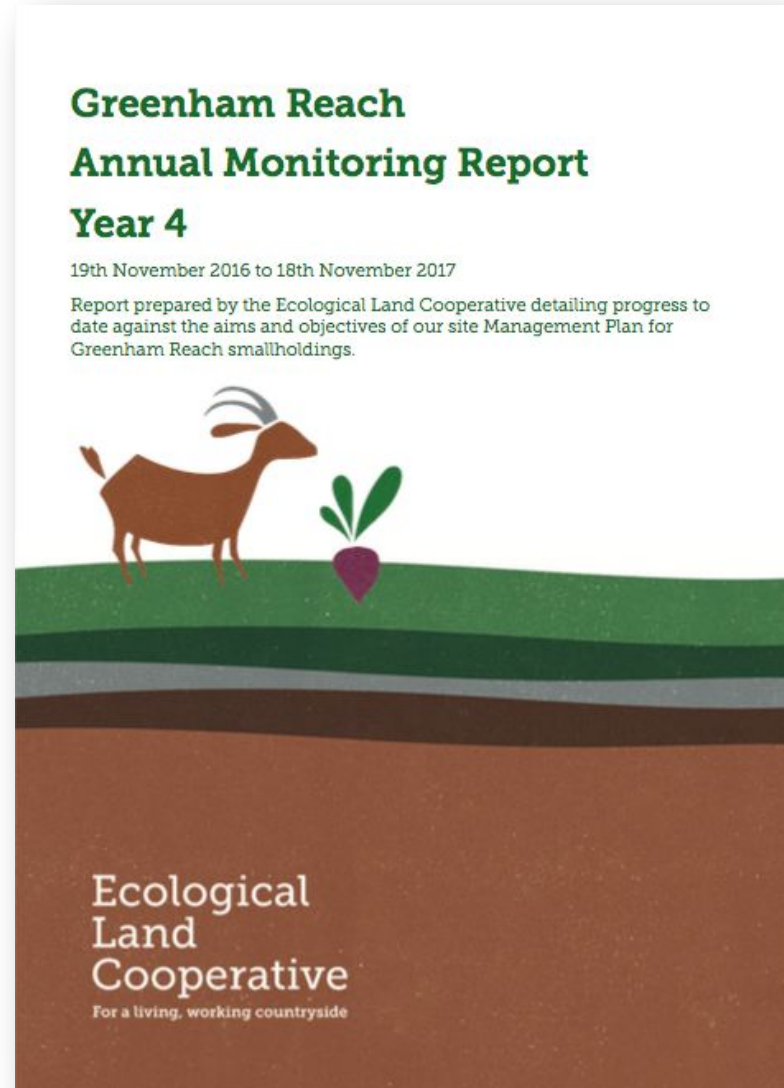


Monitoring

We are committed to reporting annually to the local planning authority on progress at Greenham Reach and all our sites.

We report on environmental, social and economic impact, including:

- employment and voluntary opportunities created;
- the state of the soils and habitats;
- traffic generated;
- energy and water use;
- waste treatment;
- visual impact



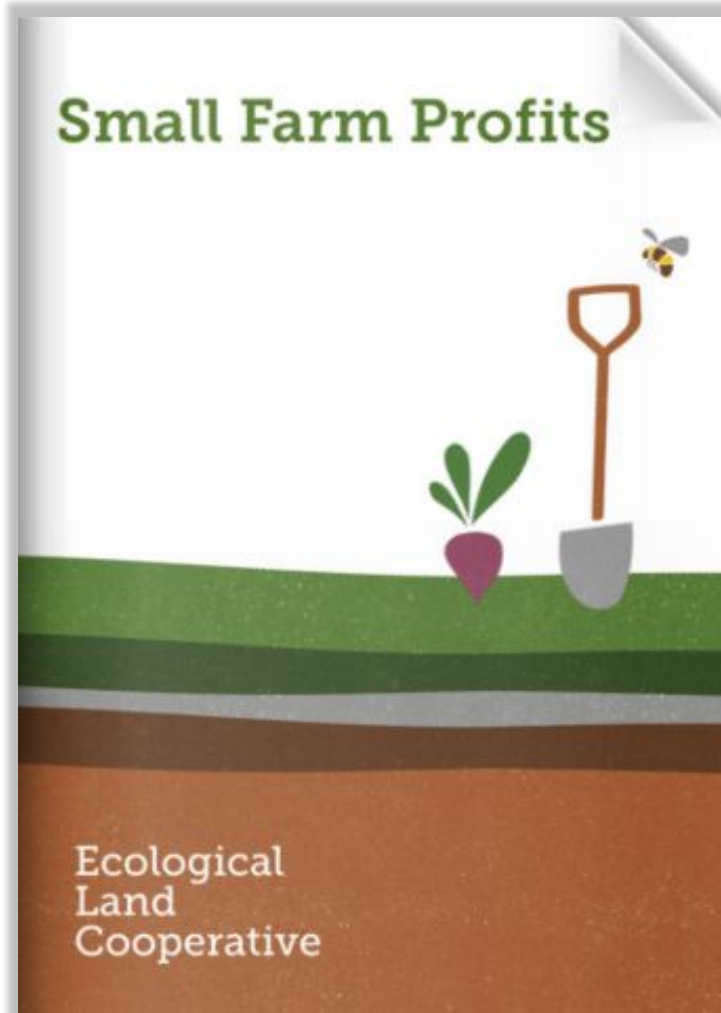
Monitoring

Our 150-year lease requires tenants to comply with our Management Plan and they agree to ensure:

- At least one member of each household works full-time, or two or more members work part-time, on the holding so that there is at least one FTE worker.
- No subletting, etc.
- No synthetic inputs.
- Conservation of existing habitat.
- On-site renewable energy generation.
- Ensure all new buildings are reversible.
- Sell-on affordably only – at the rate set in the lease.



Research



- Research shows that direct sales of premium, organic produce, plus lower costs, together with adding value and on the farm, can support good incomes.
- Our new booklet demonstrates that small farms can, and do, make a profit in the UK today.
- The booklet provides proof that it is possible to create economically viable, sustainable and highly productive enterprises on very small acreages.

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Greenham Reach, Devon

Our first cluster of
three small-scale
ecological farms
has just been
granted
permanent
planning





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Arlington, East Sussex

Temporary planning
permission granted
for our second site in
August 2018 and
farms will be
established in late
2019

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Furzehill, South Wales

Land leased to local
Community
Supported
Agriculture project
Cae Tân. Two OPDs
(One Planet
Developments)
planned



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Sparkford, Somerset

Land purchased in
October 2018.
Applied for
temporary
planning
permission in
August 2019





Planning Experience: Managing the Challenges

Greenham Reach

Mid-Devon LPA

Application ref: 11/02007/MFUL

Validated: 20th December 2011

Refused by Committee: 7th June 2012

Appeal Ref:

APP/Y1138/A/12/2181808, 2181821 &
2181807

Allowed: 18th April 2013

**Permanent Permission granted by
delegated decision**



Arlington

Wealden LPA

Application ref: WD/2017/0340/F

Validated: 27th March 2017

Appeal against non-determination

Submitted: 12th January 2018 WITHDRAWN

Resubmission ref: WD/2018/1473/F

Validated: 9th July 2018

Granted by delegated decision: 8th

August 2018



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NB

Positive Story

- Easier, swifter and more favourable
- Increased awareness of and commitment to ecological issues and a broader understanding of sustainability within LPAs
- Support and good relationship with planning professionals

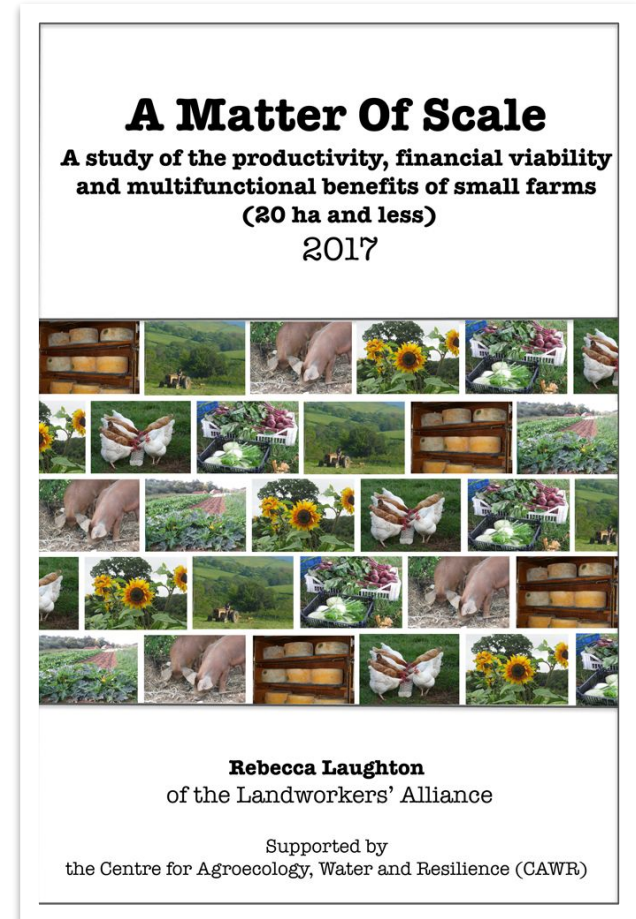
Also

- Not representative of the experience of others
 - Relevance of the ELC model
- May not be reflective of our future challenges.
 - Importance of a supportive Case Officer

1. Increasing Awareness

Challenge: Making a case for the validity and importance of low impact farming methods

“23. The council contends that some of these arrangements appear to adopt a “hair shirt” approach to the management of the small holdings and points out that other less labour intensive methods of controlling pests and heating polytunnels could be adopted”



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Challenge: Demonstrating that low impact farming enterprises can and do meet functional / essential need policy test.

*29. The Management Plan, then, is clearly aimed at securing the use of the proposed smallholdings to create and sustain low-impact livelihoods, while facilitating research into the viability of such livelihoods. In this context it is not unreasonable that prospective tenants should adopt and seek to develop, as part of their business proposals, methods of pest-control, crop-care and eco-agriculture that both comply with this ethos and are proportionate to their particular small-scale enterprises. **I accept that the labour-intensive nature of such practices, necessary to ensure that a sustainable livelihood could be developed without resort to agro-chemicals and reliance on fossil fuels, would require the worker's presence and involvement to such an extent that the need could only be met by living on-site.***

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Managing the challenge

- Research
- Community Engagement
- Collaboration with the LPA



2. Reducing Risk

Challenge: Reduce risk of proposals resulting in new isolated homes in the countryside.

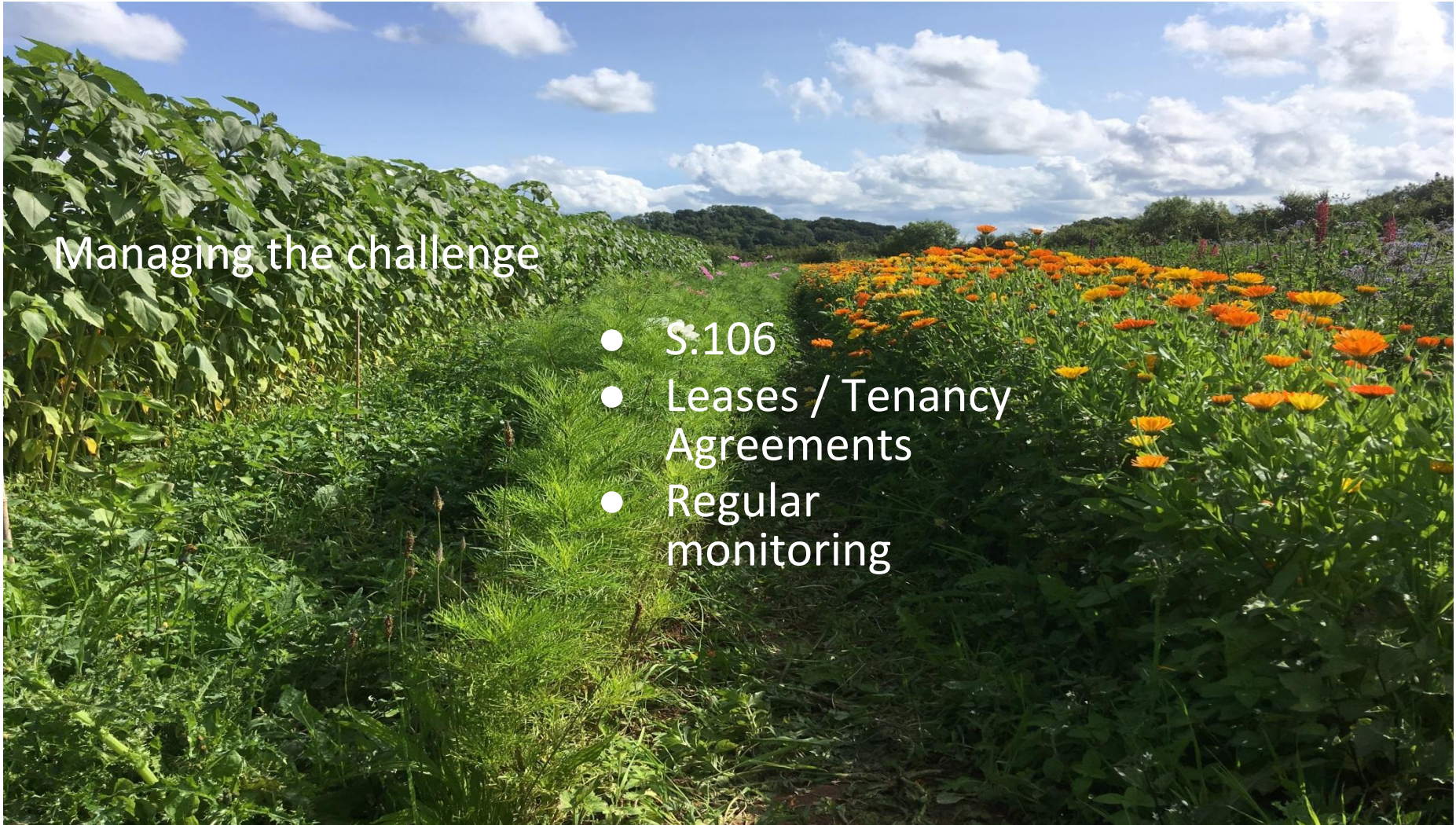
“30. Moreover, the requirements and restrictions of the Management Plan, along with others contained in the leasehold agreements and the S.106 Undertaking, would be likely to deter prospective tenants who might simply be seeking a means of obtaining a dwelling in the countryside. Living a low-impact lifestyle and developing a symbiotic relationship with the land involves foregoing some of the normal trappings of modern day life while engaging in extensive, and at times very intensive, physical labour. I consider that the co-operative society’s role in assessing applicants, and subsequently assisting and monitoring their progress, would also help to ensure that prospective tenants were genuinely committed to this type of rural enterprise.”



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Managing the challenge

- S.106
- Leases / Tenancy Agreements
- Regular monitoring



3. Planning Policy

Challenge: Dealing with policy ambiguity

Flexibility within existing policy framework does allow for the type of LID we are promoting. However, this flexibility and the policy void around LID in England leads to uncertainty.



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Managing the challenge

- Increase circulation of successful LID Appeals
- Encourage an ecologically centred approach in determining applications
- Campaign for policy change

*35. The Council's second reason for refusing the proposals was its **concern that they would set a precedent for further dwellings, in association with permaculture and agroforestry proposals**, in the countryside. Firstly, it is important to note that development does not proceed by way of precedent; [...]. Secondly, the particular circumstances of the current proposals[...], clearly demand a great deal of commitment and investment from those involved and are unlikely to be easily replicated by people merely seeking a dwelling in the countryside. Thirdly, provided that proposals for other dwellings associated with permaculture and agroforestry complied with the relevant policies, **it is not clear to me why the Council would consider encouragement for them to be undesirable.***

Ongoing solutions

- Increase understanding of / evidence to demonstrate, the viability of Low Impact Holdings
- Provide support to low impact applicants
- Improve network of planning, academic and legal professionals with an interest in LID
- Work collaboratively and improve community engagement
- Campaign for the inclusion of policy for low impact development in emerging local plans
- Campaign for National Planning Policy change



Food for thought

- What could / should policy for LID look like? OPD?
- What are Planning Officers Concerns?
- Involvement / feedback / support in putting together LID planning guides, from Planning Officers and Consultants



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THANK YOU

*www.ecologicalland.coop
info@ecologicalland.coop
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