



The Biodynamic Land Trust

stewarding farmland for a living, working countryside

Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2016





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Society Information

Chairman	T Brink
Directors	P Cody R Harries E Hashemi C Stockdale G Kaye T Brennan
Society secretary	G Kaye
Registered office	Painswick Inn Gloucester Street Stroud GL5 1QG
Auditors	Alanbrookes Limited PO Box 258 Stroud Gloucestershire GL6 8WZ

Directors of the Society

The directors who held office during the year were as follows:

M Large (Resigned 15 May 2016)

T Brink - Chairman

R Evans (Resigned 29 November 2015)

R Harries

E Hashemi

C Stockdale

G Kaye

T Brennan

The following director was appointed after the year end:

P Cody (appointed 7 July 2016)

The directors present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2016.

Annual Directors' Report

The Biodynamic Land Trust (BDLT) was registered as a community benefit society with the Financial Conduct Authority in November 2011, and soon afterwards became an exempt charity. Last year's report can be sent to members on request.

This year has been both a very tough and a very fruitful year with the Land Trust making big strides in development, acquisitions and knowledge and therefore in what it can offer. Three pieces of land were bought and leased, two share offers successfully brought to conclusion and a new one launched, several excellent workshops run, new staff engaged and our own office space developed.

Another big event in the year was the retirement from active work for the Land Trust of its founder and instigator Martin Large. Martin felt this was the right time to retire and gave notice in 2014, a process of advertising and interviewing took place over a period of months and Sebastian Parsons was appointed to start in September 2015.

We thank Martin, with his energy, creativity, experience and skills for all he has done, he will be sorely missed but the team hope to carry on the good work he instigated and set in motion. We welcome Sebastian Parsons who is taking up the role to carry on the leadership under the strategic direction of the board.

Achieving the Aims

The directors consider that the BDLT is working well to achieve its aims, having supported a number of people and organisations with potential projects some of which have now come into being and are being developed on land now owned by the Land Trust.

From the connection with other organisations within the UK and across Europe and both via the Gruntvig and Erasmus+ programmes, the International Biodynamic Association, as well as the general media, we are aware how endangered the sustainable, organic/biodynamic and small-medium size family farm has become. So many farms are going out of business due to market pressure on criteria and prices, increased legislative pressure, bank repayment and interest pressures as well as farmers retiring without direct successors.

The UK has one of the fastest growing agricultural land value in the world, as well as amongst the most expensive, putting it out of the reach of entrant farmers. With most County Councils now selling off their farms to the highest bidder and landowners looking for higher rents, affordable access to farmland for sustainable farming is becoming ever more difficult. The big farms, businesses and city investors are buying up fields and farms at high prices as they come on the market. So the Land Trust's work is ever more important and must be ever more creative to find ways to make land more accessible and to stay available for small-medium community farms who have a positive approach to sustainable eco-systems.

1. Governance, Policies, Structure and People

Our original team of directors (and including the Society Secretary) have worked well together, supporting transition as Martin Large stepped back from being the lead and Executive Director and steering and supporting Sebastian Parsons to take up the Executive Lead role.

We feel we have a good sized team of directors with a good spread of skills and backgrounds so as to carry the activities and responsibilities well and suitably support the executive members of the team. We have had two directors leave the Board so we are inviting new guest Board Members to see if they may become good replacements for Robin Evans and Martin Large:

- Timothy Brink (Chair) has a biodynamic farming background and organisation and management skills as shown when he was director of BDA Certification;
- Chris Stockdale is our BDA appointed director (i.e. the representative of the Custodian Trustee). He is a farmer, currently Chair of BDA trustees and deeply involved supporting the 'End Ecocide' movement;
- Tom Brennan is an environmental lawyer, trained in biodynamic farming and growing and has worked in the voluntary sector for a number of years.
- Rachel Harries is involved in many aspects of the Soil Association, their Land Trust, Future Grower scheme, new farmers support and access to land, and also brings skills in promotion and PR;
- Ella Hashemi has completed her biodynamic 'apprenticeship' and a degree in Economics and has over the last couple of years initiated and got going a network for young farmers;
- Gabriel Kaye is both (part-time) administrator and a director, also carrying the role of 'society secretary', she has been involved with biodynamics, land and growing all her life and has twenty years of working with organisational administration, legal frameworks and management.

Other people working (all part-time) in the BDLT are:

- Sebastian Parsons has been appointed and welcomed to take on the Executive Lead /Executive Director role since September 2015, replacing Martin who retired. Sebastian brings a wealth of experience in business creation and management, community benefit societies, farming and is CEO of Stockwood Community Benefit Society. He is in his first year in this role and attends Board meetings ex-officio.

- Helen Appleyard is the bookkeeper and finance coordinator; she is a qualified accountant and is presently training in 'community shares'. Helen has improved the BDLT's accounting systems, bringing greater clarity so that traceability and transparency are improved.
- Evelyn Richardson joined the team in June 2015 to help with the work of communications and keeping the website up to date and newsletters going out to members and supporters.
- Sarah Hale joined the team in May 2015 as assistant administrator to help with the influx of work resulting from the two share offers. Sarah left the organisation in February 2016.
- Natasha Ramm replaced Sarah Hale as assistant administrator in March 2016. She has a wealth of skills and experience in setting up and running small businesses. She supports the administration and share offer management as well as bookkeeping, she also takes minutes at Board meetings freeing Gabriel to be more involved in the presentations, discussions and updates.

2. Membership

Membership application becomes effective when shares have been accepted and the specific project has been realised (bought or long lease signed), which can take some time. There were 48 members/shareholders investing shares in the Brambletye Fields project and general support at the 31st March 2015.

At 31st March 2016 this had risen to a total of 416 due to completing on the Week Land Share Offer, the Hammonds Farm Lot 3 Share offer and some new general members. This shows the public engagement in acquiring land is working well. The majority of members are local to the projects they have supported but there are also a number of country and world-wide members supporting the work of the Land Trust.

3. Land and Other Projects

- a. Brambletye Fields: a 2012 completed project of 38 acres leased to Tablehurst Farm which was purchased by the BDLT with the support of 44 members and 3 donations, a personal loan and funds from our foundation donation.
- b. Rush Farm: from the autumn of 2011 the BDLT worked to help secure Rush Farm, Stockwood, Worcs. Due to the complex nature of this project, in which the Parsons family wished to secure Rush Farm and Stockwood Business Park into trust for the future, it was found that the best solution was to set up a partner community benefit society, Stockwood Community Benefit Society Limited (SCBS). The BDLT is a joint custodian trustee to protect Rush Farm in particular. The BDLT supported SCBS buying the farm and business park with a loan of £125,000 (June 2014) for 3 years and £25,000 in shares (Feb 2014). Thus the BDLT supported and helped to secure 160 acres of biodynamic land for an investment of £150,000 through this partnership.
- c. Huxhams Cross Farm/Week Land Project, South Devon: the BDLT worked from March 2014 with the Dartington Hall Trust to buy a 999 year leasehold on 34 acres of land at Week near Dartington. The BDLT launched the community share offer in July 2014 to buy this long lease. £100,202 in shares and £61,500 in personal interest-free loans with donations of £6,816.50 was raised with core BDLT funds to cover the costs of long-term lease, legal costs, promotion of the share offer and the cost of fundraising.



Spraying biodynamic preparation 500 at Rush Farm

The land has been taken on by Marina O'Connell as main farmer/grower and her Apricot Centre team, including Bob Mehew as project coordinator, with her husband Mark providing Well-being services as part of the overall project. They are keen to work with the community and local needs to fine-tune the activities over the first few years together and have worked with the BDLT and local input on a land-use farm development plan. The BDLT has launched a second share offer to help fund an extra £150,000. £100,000 will be for core infrastructure: the provision of water and sewerage systems, electricity and phone lines, a barn and training/wellbeing centre. The additional £50,000 will repay a short-term loan. The Apricot Centre will invest in their own business including the consumable needs of polytunnels, fruit trees, tractor and other equipment and livestock such as chickens and cows.

The long-term lease with Dartington Hall Trust was signed in September 2015 and enables this developing farm to become a part of the Dartington Learning Campus for innovative agricultural systems and 'farming for the future' while working with its own community of volunteers and potential customers. The BDLT fifteen year lease with the Apricot Centre CIC was then signed and Bob Mehew and Marina O'Connell have been developing the farm site and activity since. Bob moved to Devon from Essex last autumn and Marina and family visit regularly and also organise and plan things from afar. For more information see our website and the Apricot Centre.

www.biodynamiclandtrust.org.uk/securing-and-protecting-land/land-share-offers/huxhams-cross-farm/

www.apricotcentre.co.uk/huxhamscrossfarm

- d. Oakbrook Farm: the dream of getting a project close to the home of the Land Trust became a possibility in May 2015 when a local farmer retired and put his large farm up for sale in three lots; Hammonds Farm near Stroud. The BDLT put out news of the possibility of buying Lot 3 of Hammonds Farm (41 acres of mostly pasture including 11 acres of arable) and asked for pledges, these came in quickly so the Board agreed to launch a share offer in late June and a rush of activity was engendered to get enough shares, gifts and loans by the end of July to put in a considered bid. Much fundraising continued all summer and autumn with farmland walks, high street stalls, cultural evening etc. August and September were spent negotiating price and terms and more fundraising.

The sale completed on 13th November and Stroud Community Agriculture (SCA) took on a lease to steward and start converting the land to organic/biodynamic while a number of possible projects came together. Land use planning workshops took place and a group to hold the land coalesced. The finance package was successful by Christmas with just one promised loan not yet realised.

The group to hold this nascent farm (now called Oakbrook Farm) is still in process but activity has started. The land is being cared for by the SCA till November. Volunteers have come forward to help make the new farm happen and to join in various day activities on the land. This has been an exciting and challenging project and a great success. Its development into a fully functioning farm with buildings etc is the next step.

- e. We have worked with Noltlands Farm in Orkney which is in need of support to survive and develop. Due to the urgent need and risk to a substantial part of the farm being sold, the Land Trust stepped in and bought 50 acres to save them for this developing farm. These have now been rented back to the farmer and a share offer will be launched this year to recoup the funds expended by the BDLT. This is a great project of a small dairy farm with a cheese processing dairy being set up and we look forward to presenting this great project to the public.
- f. The Biodynamic and Organic Seed Co-operative found land and buildings in Lincolnshire. They have launched their own Community Benefit Society with the full support of the BDLT. We have invested £10,000 in shares and a loan of £20,000 as well as providing some technical support to our new sister Community Benefit Society. The Land Trust will also accept donations to invest in shares to protect this land at Gosberton Nursery for biodynamics into the future.
- g. Several other leads were followed up and explored for other projects and advice given to individuals, groups and charities in Gloucestershire, Sussex, Wales, and Scotland. Some of these others may develop into full BDLT projects in due course.
- h. Farm Succession: some of the above projects are potential legacy or succession projects. A Legacy Policy and document was established (in consultation with our solicitor) and several biodynamic/organic farmers are now looking at the potential of legacies to the BDLT. A questionnaire has been developed to inform the start of discussions for potential projects. A workshop on succession questions was held in October 2015. There is an informative article by Martin Large and David Riddle that addresses much of the material presented and this is available on request.

4. Investing in the Future

The BDLT set up a partner organisation, Ecodynamic Community Benefit Society Ltd, in 2012/13 which offers an environmental, social and fair financial return to investors based currently on a wind turbine in Cornwall. The interest from the BDLT loans and shares in Ecodynamic and Stockwood CBS are helping to fund the BDLT work and development. This is an important income stream for the BDLT.

5. Securing BDLT's Core Costs

A new perspective on assuring the running costs is being developed where there are three distinct categories of operational costs: Stewardship running costs, Core and Development costs, and Project costs.

Stewardship covers the costs the BDLT incurs in looking after the land it has and assuring its continued existence as an organisation at a basic level (minimal office and administration, low-level Board activity and basic legal reporting requirements). Our policy and practice is that Stewardship costs are covered by the rental income (see below).

Core and Development costs enable the BDLT to look at potential projects, be present in the world at events and online and develop its potential to respond to needs as per its aims. The BDLT investment policy is designed to ensure that these costs are covered by other investment income (see page 8).

Project costs are only engendered when there is a specific project that has been agreed by the Board and funding is being sought or has been achieved for it. Project costs are added directly to the fundraising total for a project. The majority of project costs are capitalised as part of the ongoing value of that specific project.

This perspective allows the Board to make strategic decisions quickly and easily and to see clearly how the finances of any sector are balanced as part of the whole.

With the current amount of land paying rent (37 acres at Brambletye, 34 acres at Huxhams Cross, 41 acres at Oakbrook and 50 acres at Noltlands) sufficient income is assured to cover the basic Stewardship of the organisation and land thus assuring its future.



Butterfly, one of the Noltlands Farm's contented cows

To cover Core and Development costs the Board has invested some of its core funds in sister organisations to create an ongoing income to run the BDLT core activities and development and be in a position to respond quickly to potential projects coming towards it. This income is from loans and shares and any donations not specific to a designated project. Our current supportive investments in Ecodynamic CBS returns 7.5% on the loan and 3.5% on shares, whilst Stockwood Community Benefit Society returns 7.5% on the loan and currently 5% on the shares. A slightly greater level of income will continue to be sought, including further investments, to increase this income flow so that all running costs and initial project exploration costs can be easily covered by sustainable income, rather than donations.

Specific Project development costs are funded as part of that specific project budget and come from the specific fundraise. Due to charitable status these can be kept low at 6-9% for most land acquisitions and around 5% for other share offers.

The BDLT is in the process of developing a Reserves policy that clearly defines restricted, designated and free reserves in the income and financial reserves of the Trust. This clarifies, along with our 7 year budget-cashflow plan, what funds are available for project investment and what is needed for various costs and loan repayments at various times.

6. Communications

- Website: This is being constantly updated and provides a large amount of information for those interested in Land Trusts and its principles as well as those wanting more practical information on our projects; www.biodynamiclandtrust.org.uk. This is supported by newsfeeds and blogs.
- Facebook: this is a regularly updated form of communication that supports the activity of website and newsletters, it can connect other organisations activities and help call in volunteers for various projects.
- Leaflets: we have a general BDLT leaflet that lays out the principles and activities of our work. Project specific leaflets and prospectus are now developed as needed for each fundraise/project. These are made available in hard copy and pdf (emails and website distribution).
- Members Newsletters: We now have regular (and specific) e-newsletters going out to around 500 members and friends of the BDLT to share updates, news and invites to events and activities; paper versions of the key ones are posted to those not using email.



Oakbrook Starter Farm Polytunnel

- AGM: this is another form of communication and in 2015 was linked to a workshop for members and friends on farm succession, including gift-, sale- and lease-back possibilities. All members may request the annual report if not received as part of the AGM papers. 2016 AGM will be linked to the Biodynamic Agricultural Association (BDAA) AGM and be part of an overall day of inspiration on all things biodynamic in Devon with a visit to Huxhams Cross Farm and other local BD activities.
- Press Releases: There have been a number of press releases in connection with various aspects of the work and projects in many types of publications, local newspapers, local news/parish news, national and international magazines and newsletters as well as the Guardian and Financial Times. This is ongoing work.

Communications are key to our activity, as without public awareness we cannot access new shareholders or further support for our projects, nor the wider support that 'access to land' and sustainable and biodynamic farming deserves.

7. Outreach, Capacity Building and the Gruntvig Learning Exchanges

- a. Grundtvig and EU networking: The BDLT has partnered with the 'Soil Association Land Trust' with Rachel Harries to take part in an EU-wide learning exchange with other EU Access to Farmland type organisations and Land Trusts. This two-year project is now completed but funding has been found under an Erasmus+ programme for continued networking where the Soil Association will keep the BDLT updated. The Gruntvig project and Erasmus+ have been very beneficial for the BDLT both in learning and in networking across the EU and we have been able to progress some areas with help from other EU partners with more expertise and vice versa. The BDLT made two presentations at the Access to Land EU group when they met in January 2016 – This group have produced a short film which can be seen by following the link below.

www.accesstoland.eu/-Our-film-The-Land-for-our-Food-



Oakbrook cows

- b. At the Oxford Real Farming Conference 2015 the BDLT again had a presence, in conjunction with the BDA and Seed Co-operative.
- c. The BDLT is reaching out to the organic sector and other sustainable organisations via stands at Organic Research Centre events, Triodos Bank and other suitable events to make its work better known and learn from other organisations.
- d. Funders: We have been working with the 'A Team Foundation' regarding support for one or more of our land projects and hope they will help fund this work in the future. Bob Mehew has been working as a fundraiser for the infrastructure of the Huxhams Cross land on behalf of the BDLT (as well as separately for the Apricot Centre) putting in bids to a number of trusts and foundations who may support infrastructure for land and projects. Funding has been found for a number of small projects and an application is being submitted for a 40% grant on the Training and Well-being Centre which would be excellent. Other sources of funding explored are Awards for All (Lottery) as a possible support for community projects at Oakbrook.

8. Finance Overview and Management

Management costs and administration of the BDLT as both an exempt charity and a Community Benefit Society are being kept to a minimum. Flexibility and effectiveness being key to keeping costs as low as possible means that a self-employed team to do the work of developing the access to land processes, administering the activity and keeping the books is the most suitable at this stage of development, but this has changed from April 2016 to provide some employed part-time posts with variable contracts.

The BDLT took on its own office space in September 2015 after a great spurt in activity running two share offers, events and a separate land acquisition which made the level of hours and desk space needed too much for the friendly organisations we were sharing space with. Having dedicated space has made team development, processes and communication better and is helping the organisation move forward.

Overall this has been a very busy year full of developments and successes. New perspectives have been introduced by Sebastian Parsons and a grateful recognition felt for Martin Large for all that he has brought about and achieved through the Land Trust.

Income and Expenditure Account

for the Year Ended 31 March 2016

	2016	2015
	£	£
Income	59,175	11,057
Project costs	(40,826)	(11,250)
Gross surplus/(deficit)	18,349	(193)
Administrative expenses	(38,058)	(27,439)
Operating surplus/(deficit)	(19,709)	(27,632)
Other interest receivable and similar income	18,710	21,761
Surplus/(deficit) on ordinary activities before taxation	(999)	(5,871)
Surplus/(deficit) for the financial year	<u>(999)</u>	<u>(5,871)</u>



Balance Sheet at 31 March 2016

	2016	2015
	£	£
Fixed assets		
Tangible fixed assets	939,866	204,082
Investments	60,000	50,000
	<u>999,866</u>	<u>254,082</u>
Current assets		
Debtors	216,374	202,353
Cash at bank and in hand	228,974	668,617
	<u>445,348</u>	<u>870,970</u>
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	(37,620)	(108,231)
Net current assets	<u>407,728</u>	<u>762,739</u>
Total assets less current liabilities	1,407,594	1,016,821
Creditors: Amounts falling due after more than one year	(163,000)	(13,000)
Net assets	<u>1,244,594</u>	<u>1,003,821</u>
Capital and reserves		
Called up share capital	292,152	50,450
Income and expenditure account	952,442	953,371
Shareholders' funds	<u>1,244,594</u>	<u>1,003,821</u>

Fixed asset investments represent withdrawable shares held in Ecodynamic Community Benefit Society Limited (£25,000), Stockwood Community Benefit Society Limited (£25,000) and Biodynamic and Organic Plant Breeding and Seeds Ltd (£10,000).

Significant **debtors** include: Stockwood Community Benefit Society Ltd of £125,000 (2015 - £126,563), Croft West Ltd of £44,250 (2015 - £75,000), Biodynamic and Organic Plant Breeding and Seeds Ltd of £20,000 (2015 - £nil) and Crossfields Institute of £25,822 (2015 - £nil).

Creditors amounts falling due after more than one year are loans for Hammonds Farm of £100,000 (2015 - £nil), Week Land of £61,500 (2015 - £11,500) and Brambletye Fields of £1,500 (2015 - £1,500).

Stewarded Land

Owned by Biodynamic Land Trust

Land	Acres Stewarded	BDLT Funds Invested	Other Funds Raised	Purchase Price	Public Investment*
Brambletye, Sussex	37	£144,050	£50,950	£195,000	26%
Week / Huxhams Cross Farm, Totnes	34	£81,482	£168,518	£250,000	67%
Hammonds / Oakbrook Farm, Stroud	41	£100,988	£289,012	£390,000	74%
Noltlands, Orkney Islands	50	£137,000	£0	£137,000	0%**
	162	£463,520	£508,480	£972,000	

* Percentage of public investment ** Share offer not launched yet

Biodynamic Land Trust is Custodian Trustee

Land	Acres Stewarded	BDLT Funds Invested	Other Funds Raised	Purchase Price	Non-BDLT Investment
Rush Farm*, Worcestershire	150	£150,000	£750,000	£900,000	83%

* Biodynamic Land Trust Ltd is a custodian trustee of Stockwood Community Benefit Society Ltd, the owner of Rush Farm

Total Stewarded Land

Land	Acres Stewarded	BDLT Funds Invested	Other Funds Raised	Purchase Price
	312	£613,520	£1,258,480	£1,872,000

Securing and protecting biodynamic farmland

Connecting people and land

Stewarding a living, working countryside



The Biodynamic Land Trust

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www.facebook.com/biodynamiclandtrust

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