

HOW TO BE A CARE-FARMER FOR € 73:
A SHAREHOLDER SURVEY OF THE *FORDHALL COMMUNITY LAND INITIATIVE* (UK)

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Abstract

In response to a media appeal during 2005/6, approximately 8000 people from 24 countries donated a total of €1.5 to purchase a 56 hectare organic farm (“Fordhall Farm”) in the English Midlands, much of it in £50 (€73) not-for-profit shares. They now collectively own the farm and have voting rights in the *Fordhall Community Land Initiative* (see www.fordhallfarm.com for details) which aims to re-connect people with farming and educate them about sustainability in agriculture.

This chapter describes the findings of a survey of shareholders about their involvement in FCLI . The results show that they had responded positively to the inspirational vision of the appeal. They wanted to save the farm from being bought by developers and were satisfied with their involvement. They valued ongoing contact (for example, by receiving a Newsletter) and wanted political and educational action to encourage organic and sustainable farming principles.

“Green care” is the use of agricultural land to promote well-being and quality of life for a variety of client groups. This study’s findings help us to know what motivated people to be part of the Fordhall venture and what benefits they gained from it. The research demonstrates that significant numbers of people are interested in sustainable agriculture (which has equivalent aims and values to “green care”) to the extent that they will contribute money and time if offered a strong positive message to respond to. It suggests that many more people could be involved in the green care movement if given the appropriate opportunity. Community land ownership is an option that should be considered for more green care projects.

Introduction

In this chapter I describe the background to, and findings from, a survey of a sample of approximately 8000 people from 24 countries who responded with financial help to an appeal to save an organic farm in Shropshire, England. In the course of just 12 months, over £1 million (€1.5 million) was raised to buy the farm, much of it from not-for-profit shares costing £50 each (€73). The farm is now owned by those shareholders, under the UK legal status of a charitable “Industrial and Provident Society”.

The farm is, therefore, owned by a community of people who cared enough to buy it. Perhaps this is a model that could be used elsewhere to reconnect people to farming. From such a legal foundation, co-owners could develop educational, green-care and similar charitable functions on farms.

Research described in this chapter aimed to answer the following questions:

1. Why did people contribute to the appeal to save Fordhall Farm?
2. Since the purchase of the land, have the expectations of shareholders been fulfilled?
3. To what extent did shareholders agree with “the bigger picture” of the *Fordhall Community Land Initiative*: to reconnect people with farming, to empower people to make changes in farming, and to educate people about sustainable farming?
4. What future involvement in the Initiative do shareholders intend to have?
5. What issues do shareholders want the *Fordhall Community Land Initiative (FCLI)* to address in the future?

Across Europe (and in other developed countries too), there has been a progressive “flight from the land” for a century or more. Largely agrarian countries, such as China and India, are currently experiencing the same phenomenon as they move towards an industrial, and urban, culture. As a consequence, fewer and fewer people have had first-hand experience of the countryside, and of

farming. Pretty (2007) notes that “within the next decade, the number of people worldwide in urban areas will exceed those in rural contexts for the first time in human history.” (p.40)

Does this matter? After all, cities offer many advantages over a rural setting. To the city dweller, the unfamiliarity of remote rural settings – even if they are not really geographically far from a town – can be unnerving. Moreover, the very idea of “civilisation” equates with city-dwelling (its Latin root is ‘civis’, meaning ‘citizen’ or ‘townsman’). And yet there is considerable evidence that the city dweller needs to experience connections with nature. Perhaps there are evolutionary reasons for this, as Wilson’s concept of biophilia (Wilson, 1984) implies. Whatever the reason, it seems that most of us have a desire to experience natural places and contact with animals. This desire is multi-faceted, as illustrated by Pretty’s research in the UK with more than 3000 people. He found five reasons people had for engaging with nature and green space: sensory stimulation, natural and social connections, physical activity, livelihood services, and escape (Pretty, 2007, p. 29).

One aspect of people’s desire to connect with the natural world is the growing consumer interest in sustainability, organic food production, animal welfare, and an aspiration to a “greener” life style. Organic food sales in the UK, for example, have doubled since 2000, and are now said to be worth £1.2 billion, whilst a market research survey by the UK company Mintel found that only 29% of people never bought organic food. According to the same survey, sales are predicted to reach £2 billion by 2010 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4551304.stm>, downloaded September 11, 2007).

Consumer interest in “green” issues is also evident in the many gardening, wildlife and country-living magazines in newsagents’ shops. One that has been recently launched in the UK (in 2007) is entitled, “Move to the Country”. Its advertising appeals to those who have “ever dreamed of enjoying a slice of the good life, no matter where you live” and coins a new term for those wishing to move to a greener lifestyle, “greenshifting”. This paradoxical situation, of progressive physical disconnectedness from

the land on the one hand, with an increasing concern on the other, raises the question of whether a way can be found to bring about a practical re-connection between people and the land.

Campaigns and projects to re-connect people with the land share similar values and aims to those concerned with promoting “green care in agriculture” (synonymous terms include “care-farming”, or “farming for health”). “Green care” is defined, for the purpose of the eponymous EU COST 866 action, as “the utilisation of agricultural farms - the animals, the plants, the garden, the forest and the landscape, as a base for promoting mental and physical health, as well as quality of life, for a variety of client groups.” (Braastad and Bjornsen, 2006, p. 2). Many examples of care farming initiatives across Europe and in the USA are given in Hassink and van Dijk (2005), whilst Sempik, Aldridge and Becker (2005), in conjunction with the UK-based horticultural therapy charity THRIVE, surveyed therapeutic horticulture projects in the UK and found many projects in operation, offering green care for a range of service-users.

Yet it is not just for people with special service needs that nature-contact is beneficial. Enlightened town planners across Europe built green spaces, such as parks and gardens, into their designs. In the UK, there is the concept of the “green belt” around cities, where building is extremely restricted. Evidence for the benefit of green spaces was probably not thought necessary in earlier times (perhaps the value of nature-contact was self-evident), but increasingly we need an evidence base for decision making. Increasing scientific attention has been paid to the possible benefits for the health and wellbeing of the general population (that is, not just for people in receipt of special health or social services). For example, Grahn and Stigsdottir (2003) argue for more green areas to be included in town planning, since their study of nearly 1000 people in Sweden showed a positive correlation between the use of urban open green spaces and self-reported experiences of stress. Peacock, Hine and Pretty (2007) compiled a report for the UK mental-health charity MIND, which included both a review

of the literature and data from their own studies. They showed significant self-reported mental health benefits from green exercise and argued for more research on the comparative cost/benefits of green exercise over existing forms of therapy such as drug, or cognitive-behavioural programmes. (For other reviews, see, for example: Kahn (1999) on children's development of nature awareness; Lewis (1996) for a wide-ranging discussion of the value of plants in our lives; and Pretty, (2002, 2007) on issues of re-connection with agriculture and nature. More broadly, Roszak (2002) argues for "ecopsychology", wanting "to bridge our culture's long-standing , historical gulf between the psychological and the ecological"(p.14) which he believes we ignore at our peril.

Proposals to make open, green spaces available to the population at large seem to accord with the current *Zeitgeist* noted above that welcomes a lifestyle in contact with nature, evidenced by increased uptake of organic food, an interest in animal welfare, and "greenshifting". But how realistic is it? With largely urban populations, how possible is it for people to visit a farm and experience farming at first hand? Can a way be found to give large numbers of people a direct interest in, even a responsibility for, traditional farming practices? One possible way is suggested by an unusual initiative in community land ownership in the English Midlands – the *Fordhall Community Land Initiative* (FCLI).

In 2003, the young tenants of Fordhall Farm, an established organic farm in the English Midlands, were threatened with eviction by the landowners, unless they could raise the purchase price of £800,000 (€1.17 million). With community support and expert help, the *Fordhall Community Land Initiative* (FCLI) (an "Industrial and Provident Society" under UK law) was established in 2005, in which not-for-profit shares were offered to the general public at £50 (€ 73) each. Approximately 8000 people responded with share purchases, donations and interest-free loans and the farm was duly purchased in 2006; it now has "one farmer and 8000 landlords"! Details are at www.fordhallfarm.com and in the recent book by Hollins and Hollins (2007). The FCLI now owns the farm, and it is therefore

an example of community land ownership. Charlotte and Ben Hollins have a 99 year lease of the farm and farmhouse. They run the farm as an organic, working farm and facilitate the work of the FCLI. The FCLI is run by a board of trustees, elected by the shareholders, and there is currently a salaried community development manager and project director.

Fordhall shareholders have shown that they “care” for the farm. Conversely, they may benefit from their purchase – the farm extending “care” for them. This fits the definition of “green care” cited earlier: “the utilisation of agricultural farmsas a base for promoting mental and physical health, as well as quality of life, for a variety of client groups.” (Braastad and Bjornsen, 2006, p. 2). If this community land purchase could be replicated elsewhere, it offers a way for significantly large numbers of people to be personally involved in a farm – and more than involved, because the Fordhall contributors are shareholders: they collectively own the farm and have a joint responsibility for it. The research described here aimed to investigate the “ecopsychology” of the shareholders, their motivations and rewards they gained from belonging to the FCLI.

Research method

Ethical approval The study design was approved by the *Fordhall Community Land Initiative* (FCLI) board, and by the Research Ethics Committee of Keele University.

Pilot interviews I arranged face-to-face interviews with members of the FCLI board and with other early supporters of the Fordhall Farm appeal. They had volunteered their time and expertise to the appeal, and had also donated money. I asked them about their reasons for supporting the appeal and what questions they felt would be helpful to ask in a wider survey.

Online questionnaire: These interviews helped me to understand more about why people had become attracted to the appeal and I produced questions for an online questionnaire. Although a printed Newsletter was mailed out to approximately 8000 shareholders, and it would, therefore, have been

possible to mail out a printed questionnaire, it was felt that the costs of printing and additional postage were not justified by the likelihood of obtaining a larger sample of respondents. I based the questions on the pilot interview findings, and included questions that FCLI board members felt would give helpful information. A web-based questionnaire was developed, pre-trialled and launched in early March, 2007. People without Internet access could request a paper version. The questionnaire was in two parts, with multiple-choice questions in part 1 and open-ended, free-response questions in part 2. The full questionnaire is shown in the Appendix to this chapter. Responses were automatically logged in a spreadsheet, and in free-text formats. Information about the survey was placed in the Spring 2007 edition of the Friends of Fordhall Newsletter, which is sent by post to all shareholders and “Friends” (a subscription membership) (n≈8000), which is, therefore, the sampling pool for the web survey. The online questionnaire went live in April, 2007 and its availability was advertised in the Easter Fordhall Newsletter, on the Fordhall website and at the first Annual General Meeting in April, 2007.

Participant population: Details of Fordhall supporters were given in the Autumn 2006 edition of the *Friends of Fordhall Newsletter*. There were 7566 members (people who had bought shares, people who had made interest-free loans, and those who had made donations) at that time. They had raised £705,300 in shares, and a further £420,000 had been raised by a bank loan, and from interest-free loans and donations from supporters. 198 (2.6%) of members were from outside the UK, representing 23 other countries. The United States had the most supporters outside the UK (37 people), followed by France (27), and Australia (23). The breakdown by UK region showed by far the most supporters to live in the same English region as Fordhall Farm (2319 people), whilst the South-East of England (which includes London and the Home Counties) was the second most-represented region, with 1329 supporters. The most likely explanation for this pattern of support was the relative penetration of English-language news media coverage about the campaign to save the farm.

Study Results

Findings from the pilot interviews: The pilot stage interviews revealed that the early supporters of the appeal were people for whom the Fordhall message was personally important. Interviewees described personal commitment to the principles of organic farming, sustainability, and animal welfare issues in agriculture. They saw Fordhall Farm as deserving support because of its 65-year long history of organic farming, its threatened status, and the inspirational vision and energy of the FCLI. The fact that Ben and Charlotte Hollins were young, and passionate about saving the farm, inspired many, who wanted to help them. A retired couple, Mrs and Mrs H. said:

We first heard about the appeal on a Farming Today [a daily radio programme about farming], feature about Fordhall Farm.....We were not particularly interested in farming at that time – but the whole programme was about it and the difficulties it was going through. That they had no money and that the Farm had been a pioneer of organic production. We felt connected because we are very keen [on organic production], and they mentioned the shop, so we went and turned up – and there was Charlotte – that had an influence on us – such young people and so dedicated to what they wanted to do but no means of doing it as far as they could see– and we just got hooked, and wanted to do what we could – we just got drawn in to the activities.

This extract illustrates a pattern evident in other interviews in which the following components of the appeal were important:

- Media coverage of the Fordhall appeal.
- People with broadly relevant interests (such as an interest in organic food).
- The possible closure of a long-standing organic farm.
- The inspirational effect of Ben and Charlotte Hollins, both young and passionate about saving the farm.
- A desire to do something to help.

Online Survey findings

This report is based on answers to the website questionnaire made between the questionnaire going live on the internet on March 3, and May 24, 2007, when the data were analysed for this report. 146 shareholders had completed the questionnaire at that point. Their ages ranged from 20 to over 70 with

an average of 53 years. More women (57%) than men responded. 60% lived less than 3 hours travel from Fordhall. 95% of the respondents had bought shares, and some (20%) had also become a subscriber, made donations (12%), and/or been on a volunteer weekend (9%). They'd first heard about the appeal most often from newspapers (51%), and by word of mouth (22%); radio/TV and other sources were infrequent. Most (82%) had bought only 1-2 shares, which were "primarily for themselves" (76%), rather than as gifts for others, and it "mattered a great deal" to them that buying these shares showed that "people can overcome the largest challenges, against the odds". 68% had "none" or "slight" prior experience with agriculture.

Research Question 1: Why did people contribute to the appeal to save Fordhall Farm?

Fordhall shares are "not-for-profit". They cannot be sold (although shareholders can bequeath them on death) and they carry little entitlement. On the face of it, it is surprising that anyone would be attracted to contribute financially. To understand more about people's motivation, we included 14 questions in this part of the questionnaire. They were based on what people had said in the pilot interviews and during discussions with the project steering committee. (Members of the committee had talked to many shareholders during the appeal, on the telephone, in person, and through letters that accompanied donations, which had given them a general impression of what motivated people to contribute.) We hoped to find which reasons were the most salient in people's decision to buy shares. We asked respondents to rate each question on a three-point scale in terms of whether a particular reason was "very important", "quite" or "not important" in their decision to buy shares. I calculated a numerical weighting for each response, an "agreement index", which made it possible to rank order the questions in terms of importance. See Table 1 for detail.

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Table 1 gives the agreement indices for the 14 questions, in descending rank order of importance.

The most-favoured reason bears out impressions from talking to people, that one of the most important reasons for the success of the appeal was the impression given by Charlotte and Ben Hollins. Table 1 shows that several components of what they represented were important. A combination of their youth, their commitment and passion for saving the farm, their fight against developers, their inspirational vision of community land ownership, their desire to re-connect people with agriculture, and a belief in sustainability and organic farming all combined to make the message appealing. Table 1 shows how relatively important these and other features of the appeal were to this sample of respondents.

In reporting the remaining results, question and the responses are given in text panels where appropriate. The “agreement index” (see Table 1 footnote) is also given to show the overall strength of agreement that the sample had with a question..

Research Question 2: Since the purchase of the land, have the expectations of shareholders been fulfilled?

An underlying rationale of the appeal for money to buy their land was that shareholders would be joint owners, and that they would be part of a community. Most were “very satisfied” (68%) or “quite satisfied” (27%), with belonging to the FCLI (Question 13). It had not made much impact on their understanding of farming (Q14) (but the background of many respondents suggested they were already knowledgeable about aspects of farming).

Q14. To what extent has being involved with FCLI broadened your understanding of issues facing modern farming?

A great deal: 26% A little: 61% Not at all: 13% Agreement index: 165

On the other hand, there was strong agreement with the sentiment in Q15

Q15. Purchasing shares in Fordhall Farm has shown how people can overcome the largest challenges, “against the odds”. How much does this aspect matter to you personally?

A great deal: 83% A little: 16% Not at all: 1% Agreement index: 262

Research question 3: To what extent did shareholders agree with “the bigger picture” of the Initiative: to reconnect people with farming, to empower people to make changes in farming, and to educate people about sustainable farming?

This research question aimed to find out how important to shareholders were the charitable aims of the FCLI. These aims included reconnecting people with farming and education about sustainability (see <http://www.fordhallfarm.com/Project%20home.htm> for more detail).

Q16. One of the aims of FCLI is to “reconnect people with farming”. How far has this been true for you personally?

Very true: 16% Quite true: 64% Not at all true: 20% Agreement Index: 141

Q16 seems to suggest that a key aim of the FCLI receives little support from the majority of shareholders.

Q17. How important for you personally is it that Fordhall has an “educational” function in reconnecting people with sustainable farming, and the possibility of community land ownership?

Very important:65% Quite Important:31% Not important:4% Agreement Index: 235

Education, however, is seen by many people as an important aim of the Project.

Q18. A key aim of the Fordhall project is to give a sense of empowerment to people in respect of changing the current state of farming. How far do you personally feel you have a new responsibility to farming, now that you are part-owner of a farm?

I feel considerably more responsibility than before: 3%

I feel slightly more responsibility than before: 38%

My feeling of responsibility has not changed: 59%

Agreement Index: 57

This question received one of the lowest levels of agreement. A key underlying concept of the FCLI seems to be largely unsupported by shareholders.

Q19. If there was (another) community farm buy-out (for example, closer to where you live than Fordhall) how likely would you be to support it?

Very likely – the concept of community ownership is important to me: 47%

Possibly - it would depend on the specific details: 53%

Unlikely – this aspect of Fordhall is not important to me: 3%

Agreement Index: 208

Almost paradoxically, in the light of answers to Q18, Q19 receives overall support.

Research Question 4: What future involvement in the Initiative do shareholders intend to have?

I asked about future intentions in question 20 – the responses are below, in decreasing order of overall positive agreement.

Q 20. How likely are you to:

- Become/continue being a “Friend of Fordhall” [annual subscription, with regular Newsletter] :

Highly likely: 64% , Quite likely: 32%, Unlikely: 4% (Agreement index: 228)

- Visit Fordhall for the nature trail or shop?

Highly likely: 63%, Quite likely: 55%, Unlikely: 28% (Agreement index: 184)

- Buy more shares? Highly likely: 14%, Quite likely: 45%, Unlikely: 41% (Agreement index: 106)

- Go on volunteer weekends or events? Highly likely: 20%, Quite likely: 37%, Unlikely: 45%

(Agreement index: 103)

- Give (another) interest-free donation or loan? Highly likely: 3%, Quite likely: 38%, Unlikely: 59%

(Agreement index: 57)

Shareholders intend to continue their interest, either through subscribing to the Newsletter, or visiting in person. Buying more shares or making further donations is not favoured by many.

Research question 5: What issues should FCLI address in future?

Question 21 offered five possible future actions that the Fordhall board members were considering, two concerned with wider social and political action, and three specific possible developments at the farm. Most were supported, although wider social and political action were the most favoured.

Question 21: What issues would you like to see FCLI address in more detail in the future?

- Wider political action to change UK Govt. policies on food production?

Definitely: 68%, Possibly: 28%, No: 5% (230)

- Political action to changed policies on farm succession and land ownership? Definitely: 53% ,

Possibly: 41%, No: 6% (210)

- Broader range of training courses on the farm? Definitely: 37% /Possibly 60%, No:3% (Agreement index: 194)

- More emphasis on interpreting / understanding the agricultural / historical heritage of the farm?

Definitely: 40%, Possibly: 51%, No: 9% (Agreement index:192)

- Residential facilities on the farm for training courses etc? Definitely: 32%, Possibly 61% , No:6%

(Agreement index:178)

Responses to open-ended questions (Part 2 of Questionnaire)

On completing the questions above, respondents were directed to Part 2 of the questionnaire, which asked four, open-ended questions (see Appendix). There isn't space here to do justice to the sometimes copious comments people gave about their reasons for becoming a shareholder (they wrote some 25,000 words!), what they had got from being part of the campaign, what their future involvement might be, and what they thought FCLI should address in future. I have chosen three people's contributions here; although very personal accounts, they illustrate many of the answers to the four questions and gives a strong impression of how the project has touched people emotionally.

Shareholder A.

Q1. Why did you get involved in the Fordhall appeal?

I became aware of Fordhall when I drove past and saw their banner, and then checked out their website. Initially I was on a mission to find farms which didn't allow fox hunting on their land (I've stopped shopping at [name of shop] because they never replied to my emails about this) and also farms where animal welfare was important. Fordhall seemed to fit this profile so I started using their shop and got to know about their dilemma through chatting to Ben and Charlotte and through reading their leaflets. Organic food was only of peripheral interest at the time, though as soon as I began to understand the relationship between organic food and wildlife conservation, that quickly became one of the key factors.

Q2. What have you personally got from the campaign to protect Fordhall Farm?

I feel I've saved a piece of wildlife-rich land from developers, I've kept open an excellent farm shop, I've learnt that faith can move mountains. When I spoke on TV about the farm, and later when Charlotte and Ben arranged for the choir to sing Happy Birthday to me at their hog roast evening, I felt part of a new community. It's strengthened my belief that being positive in the face of apparently overwhelming difficulties is the way forward, because it's an empowering state of mind. My work with wildlife groups can be depressing and frustrating, so the success of Fordhall gave me a real boost.

Q3. Do you expect your involvement with Fordhall to change in the future? In what way?

I think I'll remain on the edge, someone who donates when they can, who promotes the farm through word of mouth and web-wise, and who visits for walks and to use the farm shop. I don't want anything else at the moment.

Q4. How would you like to see Fordhall change or develop in the future? Are there particular projects you would like them to take up, or specific issues you would like them to address?

I'm not sure I know enough to comment here. It seems to me they're doing a grand job as it is, and I'd trust Ben and Charlotte to follow the issues that are important to the community.

This respondent lives close to the farm and has been involved with the appeal from its early days and so has a relatively unusual, personal relationship that cannot be shared by most shareholders who live further away. However, the story illustrates a number of features that recur in shareholders' responses:

- A personal interest in agricultural welfare (of animals, or crops).
- Contact with the farm (personally or through media stories) that alerted the potential shareholder to the plight the farm was in.
- Charlotte and Ben are named.
- The feeling of belonging to a community.
- Satisfaction from being part of a successful appeal.

Shareholder B

Q1. Why did you get involved in the Fordhall appeal?

I saw a short article in the BBC Good Food magazine and Ben & Charlotte's story grabbed me. I wanted to try & help them albeit in a small way, by buying a share. I am probably your typical green-minded but lazy type of person - I want the world to be more organic and to reduce the burden of excessive food miles & all the rest of it but I'm busy getting on with my life and don't commit very much of my own time to making things change - buying a share to let somebody else do something so worthwhile was an easy way for me to contribute.

Q2. What have you personally got from the campaign to protect Fordhall Farm?

Just a general sense of satisfaction that I've helped a little bit.

Q3. Do you expect your involvement with Fordhall to change in the future? In what way?

I would like to visit the farm at some point but am too busy & live too far away to be able to contribute much in a hands on kind of way. If there is another point in the future where things get desperate and some more financial or other type of contribution is needed then I'll do my best to help but I'm very much hoping that the whole project will be self sustaining and that it just needed that boost at the beginning to allow it to happen. I would therefore consider giving the same kind of help to other similar projects.

Q4. How would you like to see Fordhall change or develop in the future? Are there particular projects you would like them to take up, or specific issues you would like them to address?

I'd like Ben & Charlotte to be able to carry on running the farm the best way they see fit without much interference from anybody else.

Although Respondent B is a “green minded but lazy” person, the story made him or her want to contribute in a small way, and this relatively minor contribution of buying a share has given a “general sense of satisfaction”, to the extent that the person would be prepared to help the project again, or contribute to another one. This respondent exemplifies the wish of the Fordhall initiative to involve people in farming, albeit in a small and relatively uncommitted way.

Shareholder C

Q1. Why did you get involved in the Fordhall appeal?

I have always been very interested in preserving traditional values of farming and rural living, particularly maintaining small family owned farms and organic and biodiverse farms. I have not had much opportunity to farm before, although I have kept poultry and small livestock and maintaining two allotments, one of which is a budding orchard. I heard about your farm on the news, and then through my mother... who signed me up for shares!

Q2. What have you gained personally from involvement in the Fordhall campaign?

Through the newsletters I receive, I have gained greater awareness of specific issues involved in farming, community land initiatives, and organic growing. I enjoy seeing the progress of Fordhall, and look forward to its continued success.

Q3. Do you expect your involvement with Fordhall to change in the future? In what way?

I would very much like to become involved in volunteering work at the farm, and look forward to attending open days and events.

Q4. How would you like to see Fordhall change or develop in the future? Are there particular projects you would like them to take up, or specific issues you would like them to address?

It would be lovely if there were more courses run at the farm covering all aspects of farm management, skills and techniques. I hope to progress to a smallholding in the future and would thus like to learn as much as I possibly can. An initiative such as Fordhall is an exciting and lively community to be involved with and to learn from! Keep up the great work!

Respondent C would like to farm and the Fordhall involvement gives him or her a step towards that goal. This is one example of many respondents who wished to be connected to a farm enterprise in some way but had found that extremely difficult.

Discussion

This study aimed to understand why some 8000 people from the UK and 23 other countries responded to an appeal to buy a small, run-down farm in England which would become community-owned and dedicated to re-connecting people with food and farming, through interviews and an online survey. As the planning of the research project progressed, answers to other research questions were sought, including: what people had gained from responding to the appeal to save the farm and how they wanted to see the not-for-profit organisation (the *Fordhall Community Land Initiative*) develop in future. The survey findings described in this chapter give detailed information about these questions, particularly the relative importance of different reasons the survey sample gave for responding to the appeal.

“Why people do things” is possibly the most challenging question for a psychologist! What theory of motivation can one draw on to explain why so many people responded to the Fordhall appeal? In an ethnographic, qualitative research tradition, one explanatory route is to ask people themselves: that is what we have done in the present research. Whilst no two people gave exactly the same reasons, we can see a broad pattern in the interviews and survey responses: that people responded to the “story” of two young people, trying to save their family farm, which espoused organic and sustainability principles, fighting against developers - not just to save it for themselves, but also to create a community-owned resource that would have an educational function to re-connect people with the land (see Table 1). This multi-faceted message had progressively wider media appeal (with the Saturday April 11, 2006 feature article in the UK “quality” newspaper, the Daily Telegraph (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/wine/main.jhtml?xml=/wine/2006/04/15/edforhall15.xml> , downloaded September 28, 2007) being a turning point, since donations grew massively from this point on and helped the Fordhall story to reach a much wider audience. There is a time-line here: response to the appeal was initially slow, but it grew as the print and broadcast media themselves saw a timely, important and human-interest story, which in turn enabled the message to reach a wider audience.

People with diverse backgrounds and concerns but united by concern for animal welfare, farming, food production and social action found themselves drawn to contribute to the project.

What has this to do with green care / care-farming? As defined earlier, green care is about bringing people on to farms to gain therapeutic benefit from being there. This is precisely what the Fordhall project is doing. 8000+ people have become closely involved in an organic farm, and their families too. They are involved by having purchased shares (indeed, they are co-owners of the land), by visiting and volunteering, and through receiving a regular Newsletter. They elect the Board of Trustees. They can vote at the Annual General Meeting. And they can contribute their ideas for further developments. Charlotte and other Board members are active nationally in the UK in a variety of initiatives promoting the re-connection of people with farming. From this involvement, as our survey shows, shareholders gain satisfaction – an increased quality of life.

More conventional care farming is growing at Fordhall - Fordhall's many visitors and volunteers include people with disabilities, a Forest School is being planned, and the educational function of the FCLI will include a wide range of target groups.

Fordhall could be a model for others. Community land ownership potentially offers a way to involve considerable numbers of people in an active and creative way with land-based activities at relatively little financial or time cost. This will benefit farming and the land, develop an increased awareness of sustainability whilst bringing lifestyle and therapeutic benefit. It offers a wider vision of care-farming – with natural resources and people being interdependent in giving and receiving care. Projects similar to Fordhall's will produce many more care-farmers, with a corresponding increase in the skill-base available.

Conclusions and Implications

European farming is under threat, and yet there is increasing public commitment to organic principles. Fewer people than ever live in traditional rural communities, and yet people seek health and lifestyle benefits from contact with nature. The Fordhall Project offers a radically new way forward, where ordinary people can re-connect with farming – by being part-owners in a community-owned enterprise committed to “green” principles. The current study has investigated the psychology of their ongoing involvement, and their attitudes to the Project may demonstrate new ways in which those who don’t own a farm can actively be “care-farmers”.

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Appendix 1: Survey questionnaire

(The printed version is shown here. The online version used the same questions in HTML format.)

Fordhall Community Land Initiative Supporters/ Members Research Questionnaire 2007



KEELE
UNIVERSITY



Dear Shareholder,

This is a paper version of the website questionnaire which can be printed off and mailed back to Fordhall, or alternatively emailed as an attachment. The online, web version is available at www.fordhallfarm.com and this automatically is sent to us on completion, should you have web access.

Best wishes
John Hegarty,
Research Psychologist.

QUESTIONNAIRE PART 1: 'FIXED-CHOICE' QUESTIONS

Section A: About you

Q1. Age (please enter) ___ (years)

Q2. Gender

Male

Female

Q3. Ethnic origin (this question is based on the UK Council for Racial Equality guidance)

(Tick one of the following sections):

White (British, Irish or other White background)

Mixed (White & Black Caribbean, White & Black African, White & Asian, Any other mixed background)

Asian or Asian British (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, any other Asian background)

Black or Black British (Caribbean, African, Other Black Background)

Chinese or other ethnic group

Prefer not to say

Q4. How far do you live from the farm, if travelling by your preferred method?

(Tick the box that most closely fits your situation)

less than half an hour away

less than an hour

1- 3 hours

4 – 6 hours

over 6 hours

Q5. What kind of contribution have you made to Fordhall?

(tick on the boxes of all that apply to you)

I have:

Bought shares (Shareholder)

Paid a subscription to become a "Friend" (Newsletter subscription)

Given an interest-free loan

Made a donation

Been on a volunteer weekend

Other (there is an opportunity to give details in Part 2 of the questionnaire)

Q6. How did you first hear about the Fordhall appeal?

(Tick one only)

- Word of mouth / local contacts
- Newspaper article
- Radio programme
- TV programme
- Other

Q7. Are you completing this questionnaire in respect of you as an individual or family member, or on behalf of a group or organisation?

(Tick ONE)

- For me as an individual/ family member
- OR
- On behalf of an organisation

Q8. What direct personal involvement with farming/growing/stock keeping have you or immediate members of your family had- now, or in the past?

(Please tick on one of the following:)

- Considerable involvement (perhaps you farm now, are retired, or grew up on a farm)
- Moderate involvement (perhaps you have worked for a time on a farm, or volunteer)
- Slight involvement (perhaps you have had friends who are farmers)
- No direct involvement at all

Q9. Before contributing to the Fordhall appeal, did you contribute money or time to organisations, initiatives or movements with similar aims, associated with:

(Tick all that apply to you:)

- Organic food production
- Integrated farm practices
- Animal welfare
- Buying locally-produced food
- Sustainability
- Conservation
- Community action or charitable ventures

Q10. Supporters have given a number of reasons for the success of the Fordhall Initiative. Please rate how important each of the following reason(s) was for you in deciding to support Fordhall (i.e. not simply important to you in general terms, but specifically important in deciding to make your contribution to Fordhall):

(Tick one of the alternatives for each reason)

10.1 The work of Arthur Hollins (founder of Fordhall and Ben and Charlotte's dad)

- Very important
- Quite Important
- Not important

10.2 Preserving the history of Fordhall Farm and its organic status

- Very important
- Quite Important
- Not important

10.3 The inspirational vision and positive attitude of Charlotte and Ben

- Very important
- Quite Important
- Not important

10.3 Two young farmers trying their best to succeed

- Very important
- Quite Important
- Not important

10.4 The threat of eviction faced by Ben and Charlotte from their family home

- Very important
- Quite Important
- Not important

10.5 To counter the growing use of green land for building and development

Very important Quite Important Not important

10.6 Concern about sustainability and conservation in agriculture

Very important Quite Important Not important

10.7 To conserve and enhance the heritage aspects of the Project - the heritage of the landscape and Fordhall's agricultural history

Very important Quite Important Not important

10.8 The importance of organic, local food production / food miles Very important Quite Important Not important

10.9 Towards preserving the future of farming for subsequent generations

Very important Quite Important Not important

10.10 To be involved in a pioneering example of community land ownership

Very important Quite Important Not important

10.11 To own a piece of English countryside

Very important Quite Important Not important

10.12 To be able to visit the farm in future

Very important Quite Important Not important

10.13 To give yourself or someone else an involvement in farming that they would not otherwise have had

Very important Quite Important Not important

10.14 Out of general interest and a desire to support a worthwhile cause

Very important Quite Important Not important

10.15 Other reason(s)

Very important Quite Important Not important

(There is opportunity later, in Part 2 of the questionnaire, for you to give reasons in your own words...)

Section B : Shareholders

(if you have not bought shares, please go to Section C)

Q11. If you are a shareholder, have you bought these

Primarily for yourself

OR

For children or grandchildren

OR

Combination of the above

(please tick one only)

Q12. How many shares have you purchased?

1-2

2-5

6-10

More than 10

(Please tick one box)

Section C: What you've gained from the FCLI

Q13. Overall, how satisfied are you with your association with the Fordhall Community Land Initiative?

(Please tick one box)

Very satisfied Quite Satisfied Neutral Quite Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

Q14. To what extent has being involved with FCLI broadened your understanding of issues facing modern far
A great deal A little Not at all

Q15. Purchasing shares in Fordhall Farm has shown how people can overcome the largest challenges, “against the odds”. How much does this aspect matter to you personally?
A great deal A little Not at all

Section D: The bigger picture

Q16. One of the aims of FCLI is to “reconnect people with farming”. How far has this been true for you personally?
Very true Quite true Not at all true

Q17. How important for you personally is it that Fordhall has an “educational” function in reconnecting people with sustainable farming, and the possibility of community land ownership?
Very important Quite Important Not important

Q18. A key aim of the Fordhall project is to give a sense of empowerment to people in respect of changing the current state of farming. How far do you personally feel you have a new responsibility to farming, now that you are part-owner of a farm?
I feel considerably more responsibility than before I feel slightly more responsibility than before My feeling of responsibility has not changed

Q19. If there was (another) community farm buy-out (for example, closer to where you live than Fordhall) how likely would you be to support it?
Very likely – the concept of community ownership is important to me
Possibly - it would depend on the specific details
Unlikely – this aspect of Fordhall is not important to me

Section E: Your future involvement with Fordhall

Q20. At the moment, which of the following do you feel you will do in future?

20.1 Purchase shares / more shares
Highly likely Quite Likely Unlikely

20.2 Give an interest – free loan or donation / further donations
Highly likely Quite Likely Unlikely

20.3 Become /continue being a “Friend of Fordhall” to receive the Newsletter regularly
Highly likely Quite Likely Unlikely

20.4 Visit Fordhall Farm for the nature trail or farm shop
Highly likely Quite Likely Unlikely

20.5 Go on Fordhall volunteer weekends or events
Highly likely Quite Likely Unlikely

Other (Please add details in Part 2 of the questionnaire)

Q21. What issues would you like to see FCLI address in more detail in the future?
(there is space to give more details in Part 2)

21.1 Residential facilities at Fordhall Farm for courses etc
Definitely Possibly No

21.2 Broader range of training courses available at the Farm
Definitely Possibly No

21.3 More emphasis on interpreting / understanding the agricultural / historic heritage of the farm
 Definitely Possibly No

21.4 Wider political action to change governmental policies on food production?
 Definitely Possibly No

21.5 Political action to change governmental policies on farm succession and land ownership?
 Definitely Possibly No

Thank you for completing this section of the questionnaire and sharing your experience with the Fordhall team. ...Now please go to Part 2 where there is an opportunity to complete open-ended questions, to give us more details of your personal interest in the FCLI.....[link to Part 2] (below)

**Fordhall Community Land Initiative (FCLI)
Research Questionnaire Part 2 – “Open-ended questions”**

(Please use as much space as you wish in answering each question – we are interested in hearing details!)

Q22. Why did you get involved in the Fordhall appeal ?

(We are interested to hear your personal “story” about what interested you about Fordhall Farm and why you decided to contribute.)

Q23. What have you personally got out of the campaign to save Fordhall Farm? (here we would like to find out what you have gained from contributing to the appeal, if anything!)

Q24. Do you expect your involvement with Fordhall to change in the future? In what way?

Q25. How would you like to see Fordhall change or develop in the future? Are there particular projects you would like them to take up, or specific issues you would like them to address?

Please email the completed questionnaire back to project@fordhallfarm.com as a Word attachment, or print off and post to: Fordhall Farm (Questionnaire), Market Drayton, Shropshire TF9 3QS

What happens next?

The statistical results will be summarised to show trends, and we will use selective quotations from answers to the open-ended questions to bring the findings to life in reports and presentations. We expect the findings to reach a wide audience internationally, as many organisations and individuals are interested to understand more about FCLI. Fordhall will also use the research findings in raising awareness of FCLI and in applying for further funds.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

On behalf of the FCLI Board,

Dr John Hegarty

Chartered Psychologist, Senior Lecturer in Psychology, Keele University

Table 1. Reasons for supporting the Fordhall appeal, in descending rank order of agreement

“Charlotte and Ben’s inspirational vision and positive attitude” (“agreement index” ¹ = 269)
“Concern about sustainability and conservation in agriculture” (260)
“Two young farmers trying their best to succeed” (256)
“Towards preserving the future of farming for subsequent generations” (254)
“The importance of organic, local food production” (250)
“To counter the growing use of green land for building and development”(249)
“Towards preserving the history of Fordhall Farm and its organic status” (243)
“The threat of eviction faced by Charlotte and Ben from their family home”(233)
“To be involved in a pioneering example of community land ownership” (205)
“To be able to visit the farm in future” (184)
“Out of general interest and a desire to support a worthwhile cause” (179)
“The work of Arthur Hollins (Charlotte and Ben’s father)” (177)
“To give yourself or someone else an involvement in farming that they would not otherwise have had” (109)
“To own a piece of English countryside” (67)

¹The “agreement index”: most of the questions asked people to say how much they agreed with a statement, or whether it was, for example, “highly likely/quite likely/unlikely” that they would do something in future. By giving a numerical weight to each response (2, 1 and zero, respectively), I worked out how much the sample as a whole was in favour of something. This number is shown in brackets. It gives not only an idea how far a particular issue was supported by the sample as a whole, but also how close overall agreement was between different questions. Most questions had three alternative answers, so the highest possible score for a question would be: $(146 \times 2) + (146 \times 1) = 438$, and the lowest possible score would be zero.