

**Wylderne Limited**  
**Community Benefit Society (CBS)**  
**Business Plan**

**‘Breathing New Life into The Wilderness’**



# **Wylderne Limited CBS**

## **Table of Contents**

**Executive Summary**

**Section 1: Background and History**

**Section 2: Purpose and Vision**

**Section 3: Community and Member Engagement**

**Section 4: Buying the Wilderness**

**Section 5: Our Community Share Offer**

**Section 6: Organisational Structures**

**Section 7: Market and Trading Activities**

**Section 8: Marketing Communications Plan**

**Section 9: Finance**

**Appendices:**

**Appendix 1: Community Share Offer Marketing, Engagement and Communications Plan**

**Appendix 2: Other Financial Scenarios**

## **Executive Summary**

Wylderne, a newly formed local community owned business, is excited to announce it is completing purchase of the Wilderness Centre in Mitcheldean.

After its sale by the County Council in 2014 to a private buyer, ownership is about to be back in community hands, and its future finally secured.

It will belong to the Forest.

To achieve our vision, we need to raise funds for important repairs, for improving and upgrading the facilities if it's truly going to be a community asset.

It needs to be a place that feels attractive, welcoming, a bit special where all ages can relax, be comfortable, and be inspired.

Your support will ensure the many people in our community who had their first formative nights away from home at the Wilderness on their school residential will know that this experience is protected for future generations.

What's more, as a community owned business we will be welcoming not only children but all age groups to this beautiful spot. We are an ideal place for connecting to and learning about nature and understanding how the unique biodiversity of the Forest fits together. We plan to offer opportunities to learn new skills too, skills a greener economy will need.

The Wilderness Centre is an iconic venue in the Forest of Dean. It is a country estate nestled within 30 acres of private grounds, with ancient woodland, wildflower meadows and gardens. It enjoys commanding spectacular views over the River Severn to the Cotswolds and the Malvern Hills over 20 miles away. Given its facilities, history, location, and ecological vitality, it is a natural place for people to connect with each other and with Nature.

Located at the northern end of the Forest of Dean in Mitcheldean, Gloucestershire, The Wilderness Centre offers outdoor education programmes for residential, and day visit groups, both catered and self-catered. The Centre is also available for hire by individuals and groups for meetings, events, conferences and activities.

The main house (built in 1805) provides residential accommodation for up to 54 people in 10 bedrooms and has 3 meeting rooms, including the Ball Room which can hold over 70 people for conferences or training. There is a fully equipped kitchen and a dining area that seats 50. In the Walled Garden there is a bell tent village which accommodates 50 people in 12 bell tents. There is also a rustic kitchen, centrally heated sitting room, large marquee, toilets, showers and a pizza oven.

For the last three years the Wilderness Centre has undertaken a Wilding Project, restoring 25 acres of grassland to its state before the land was enclosed and taken over by unchecked sheep grazing and industrialised farming. The fields have now been turned over to conservation grazing, Belted Galloway cattle and Dartmoor ponies have been introduced, and the wild boar of the Forest have been allowed access. A recent University of Gloucester field study showed that this has led to the recovery of wildflower meadows and a dramatic increase in insect and bird life. The site is also an important crossing point for species like pine marten travelling from one part of the Forest to another.

Most visitors are school residential trips drawn from Gloucestershire. A minority of schools come from the surrounding counties (Bristol, Herefordshire, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire). In 2024, 35 schools visited bringing over 1700 pupils. Of the schools that use the Centre, most rebook year on year.

Each school group that arrives is told that this is their 'home from home'. They understand that the activities they will experience are one part of their stay here and that they also will be living as a

community connected to Nature for the next few days. Each residential is designed to be a complete learning experience from the moment the children get up in the morning, how they participate in mealtimes, walk to and from their activities, and how they play in and explore the space.

The biodiversity work, grounded in the Wilding Project, has added considerable value to a learning resource already highly valued in the local community. Children, and their teachers, report that their engagement with nature (meeting the animals, foraging, working in the garden allotment) is just as enriching as the problem-solving and physical activity and challenges. For many of the young people their visit will be a first experience in picking vegetables or fruit from a garden and finding them later, on the dinner table.

The Wilderness Centre was previously a community asset in Council ownership, and from 1969 operated as an Outdoor Education and Field Studies centre until 2014, when due to financial constraints the Council had to close the Centre and put it up for sale.

In 2019 it was sold to a private buyer who resurrected the Outdoor Education side of the business until they decided it was time to sell. In October 2023, in response to this information, a small group of individuals embarked on a mission to find a way to buy the Wilderness Centre and once and for all place it into the hands of the community for its long-term protection and enjoyment by future generations.

The four founder members, including both the existing Head of The Wilderness Centre, and the Senior Instructor, plus two other individuals with a strong connection to The Wilderness and its community purpose, established Wylderne Limited as a Community Benefit Society (CBS) registered with the Financial Conduct Authority.

Since the creation of Wylderne Ltd CBS, the Directors have been working to raise the necessary funds to purchase The Wilderness Centre and its grounds, and to place it formally into the hands of the community through a community share offer.

Wylderne Ltd CBS has secured, through a mix of grants and loans, the majority of the finance to purchase the freehold of the property and grounds. However, we need to raise a minimum of £50,000 through our share offer to raise the remaining finance and cover essential works ensuring the building, grounds and equipment are up to safety and operational standards - which are imperative to the ongoing running of the outdoor education centre business and programmes which Wylderne CBS Ltd will rely upon. Our aim is to raise £150,000 through the share offer which will mean we are able to carry out more extensive repairs and improvements. This investment will realise the potential the Wilderness has always had: to be a nature connection and learning centre for the whole community, not only schools.

It is proposed that Wylderne Ltd CBS will take over the ownership of The Wilderness Centre from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2025 and will inherit the bookings for the Wilderness Centre for 2025/2026, meaning that from day one, Wylderne CBS will have a means of income.

Due to the uncertainty of the future of The Wilderness Centre over the past two years, income has understandably been negatively impacted, and the buildings, grounds and equipment have not had the investment they require which is why community investment through the community share offer is so vitally important. Creating a new community asset based on the current usage, with growth and generative opportunities, will provide long-term stability for the community, preserving natural spaces and community access to them.

#### **Wylderne Ltd CBS have 3 aims for the next 3 years:**

1. **Breathe new life into The Wilderness and improve the Wilderness Centre as a place to learn and be inspired:** by enhancing site accessibility, classroom and outdoor learning spaces, and the quality of accommodation, enabling the Centre to host diverse groups on site concurrently, while continuing and expanding the wilding programme of meadows and woodland.
2. **Develop and expand the schools and youth business:** by leveraging the existing customer base from the Forest of Dean and Gloucestershire to deliver high-quality, cutting-edge, and inclusive nature-based learning and personal development for children and young people from diverse backgrounds.

3. **Build the Forest of Dean Bioregioning Centre proposition and business:** by playing a leading role in the collaborative efforts of the District Council, local community, businesses, and environmental groups to realise the Forest of Dean's potential as a sustainable place to live and work, creating a model for the wider region.

The launch of our community share offer is scheduled for 18th June 2025. Through the purchase of shares, each shareholder will be providing essential funds to support the continuation of the operation of this valuable community asset, be entitled to vote on the future direction of the Wilderness and, in time, see a return on their investment.

## **1. Background and History**

The name 'Wilderness' dates back over a thousand years to the Norman conquest, to the times when the Forest of Dean was designated a royal hunting forest. In fact, it was originally called 'Wylderne', hence the name of the Community Benefit Society.

In 1895, when the family who lived at The Wilderness left, it became a community asset. Since then, it has been a women's sanatorium, a care home and a children's isolation hospital. There are still people in the surrounding villages who have family connections to when it was a children's hospital.

In 1969, under the ownership of Gloucestershire County Council, the Wilderness Centre became a residential outdoor education centre and field studies centre. Many local people, visitors, our suppliers, and parents who come to the site, often tell us that their own first time away from home was here at the Wilderness Centre, and how memorable an experience it was for them.

However, in 2014, in response to 'austerity' the Council sold the site to a private owner. The sale was contentious as many people saw it as the removal of a key educational resource from the community.

Those fears were partly allayed as the new business operated in a way that many of the old clientele saw as a continuation of the core outdoor education centre offering, albeit focused on primary schools. Nonetheless the business was driven by financial requirements and the deeper community connections became neglected. Similarly, the facilities and property had only essential investment and in Summer 2023 the owner announced he wanted to sell the Wilderness Centre, once again putting its benefit to the community at risk.

This news was clearly a blow and disappointing but ultimately motivating. Several of the community and staff came together to explore options for the Wilderness Centre once again to rejoin the community, under community ownership.

To achieve this, we formed Wylderne Limited as a Community Benefit Society (CBS) in October 2023, and our plans for a community buyout began to take shape. One aspect of this was that in September 2024, following Wylderne's nomination, the Forest of Dean District Council listed the Wilderness Centre as an Asset of Community Value.

We have agreed heads of terms with the current owner for the purchase of the Wilderness Centre and have raised secured grants and loans towards the purchase of the freehold. Our community share issue will take place over the summer of 2025 and we expect to complete the sale by 1st August 2025.

## 2. Purpose and Vision

Our purpose is to serve the flourishing of the local community, the unique natural habitat of the Forest, and the local economy.

Children and young people are at the heart of this vision. Building thriving lives through good mental and physical health, with an appreciation of the natural world, will be a central theme in the CBS and the Wilderness Centre's programmes and activities.

Wylderne understands the difference it would make for The Wilderness Centre to provide more access for the development of skills, opportunities for young people, access to facilities, and wider community support through the protection of this vital facility and widening participation that being under community ownership will provide and protect. Creating a new community asset based on the current usage, with growth and generative opportunities, will provide long-term stability for the community, preserving natural spaces and community access to them.

Our vision is that the Wilderness Centre will be the base for a Forest of Dean Bioregioning Centre, delivering inclusive and forward-looking nature-based learning to people from the Forest of Dean and Gloucestershire.

The Wilderness Centre will also be a convening hub for the diverse range of people and groups in the Forest of Dean and Gloucestershire who want to work together, addressing community and ecological needs for the benefit of all.

**Wylderne Ltd CBS have 3 aims for the next 3 years:**

4. **Breathe new life into The Wilderness and improve the Wilderness Centre as a place to learn and be inspired:** by enhancing site accessibility, classroom and outdoor learning spaces, and the quality of accommodation, enabling the Centre to host diverse groups on site concurrently, while continuing and expanding the wilding programme of meadows and woodland.
5. **Develop and expand the schools and youth business:** by leveraging the existing customer base from the Forest of Dean and Gloucestershire to deliver high-quality, cutting-edge, and inclusive nature-based learning and personal development for children and young people from diverse backgrounds.
6. **Build the Forest of Dean Bioregioning Centre proposition and business:** by playing a leading role in the collaborative efforts of the District Council, local community, businesses, and environmental groups to serve and realise the Forest of Dean's potential as a sustainable place to live and work, creating a model for the wider region.

We intend to develop a Wylderne organisational culture that is grounded in the regenerative qualities of:

- **Viability:** strong business model; responsive to changing customer and community needs and shifts in the business environment.
- **Vitality:** building an inspiring purpose together with our community and creating collaborative and thriving connections between people and the living systems we depend upon.
- **Capacity to Evolve:** developing our role through tuning into the Forest community and landscape in order to respond from what we can uniquely offer to what the region needs to realise its potential.

### Future Plans

Our ambition is to build on what has been the offer for the past few years and become a centre of excellence in eco-literacy. Eco-literacy (also referred to as ecological literacy) is the ability to understand the natural systems that make life on Earth possible. To be eco-literate means understanding the principles of organisation of ecological communities (i.e. ecosystems) and using those principles for creating sustainable human communities and a sustainable economy. It means understanding, appreciating and working with diversity in nature - including people. Everyone is part of the system. Everyone has a place and belongs.



Our eco-literacy will be an education in how the Wilderness Centre fits into its wider Forest ecosystem, and what our human role is in maintaining the health and flourishing of these wider systems. These ambitions fit well with the plan for the Forest of Dean soon to be designated a UNESCO Biosphere and the Council's ambition for a greener, localised and more circular economy. Biosphere reserves are 'learning places for sustainable development' and sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems.

We intend to further emphasise eco-literacy within both our school, and youth group activities to begin with (e.g. ensure time is spent working in the kitchen garden, designing new guided forest walks, building or maintaining hedgerows, surveying biodiversity). Once the new Natural History GCSE comes online, Wylderne is well placed to offer the outdoor elements needed for teaching this formal qualification.

During school holidays we will also build eco-literacy into community group offerings. Further services, also to be scheduled during school breaks, will be developed together with the Community Team at the Forest of Dean Council based on need, context and affordability. We have already established mutually agreeable arrangements with voluntary groups who have access to the site in return for supervised work in the allotment garden.

Our ability to integrate eco-literacy into what we do will emphasise the uniqueness of the offer the Wilderness Centre has for schools, youth groups and the wider community which we hope will be reflected in the number of organisations using us for field study trips thereby increasing our organisational sustainability.

Our longer-term ambitions also include becoming a Centre for training the skills needed for a sustainable economy, and a destination for businesses coming here or into the area wishing to go further along their sustainable journey.

In 2024 we successfully piloted a Regenerative Leadership programme. In March 2025 we also piloted a Regenerative Business programme. These are both part of our plans to have a rigorous, practical offering for the community's organisations (businesses and not-for-profits), where the leaders want to be more sustainable and forward looking (i.e. attractive to young people). In offering this, we are working alongside the Forest of Dean District Council officers whose role is to offer advice to local businesses.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

We are in the process of signing up to the Forest Climate Charter established as a standard mark by the Forest of Dean District Council with the support of the local Growth Hub. We are making a start by completing a carbon audit, calculating our carbon footprint with the intention to formulate a reduction plan, inspired by case studies illustrating improved productivity, environmental performance, reduced costs, increased profitability, or other impacts relating to Net Zero. Currently we have considerable roof space which could take more solar panels, and we will be taking advice on retrofitting our main building and upgrading our heating system, currently fuelled by LPG. Recommendations will be implemented as sufficient monies are raised through the current or future share offers and/or when grants become available.



### 3. Community and Member Engagement

The population of the Forest of Dean is just over 87,000 (2021 census) with four towns (Cinderford, Newent, Lydney and Coleford) and several smaller villages. Approximately 60% of the population of the Forest of Dean are aged between 16 and 65. The area is dominated by over 110 square kilometres of woodland which supports a diverse range of habitats and species of local, national and international importance.

While Gloucestershire does not suffer from much deprivation on a national scale, the Forest of Dean does, particularly around Cinderford (10 mins drive from the Wilderness Centre), parts of which are in Quintile 1 (the most deprived nationally).

Significant to extending the learning offering of our project is the evidence that a significantly larger proportion of young people leave the Forest for employment opportunities and careers than elsewhere in Gloucestershire. The Forest Economic Partnership recognises this and has launched an [Inspiring the Forest](#) initiative to raise career aspirations and promote the unique qualities of the Forest community. Further, they project that over a 30-year period there is a benefit to cost ratio of 3:1 on cashable benefits to be gained by having the Forest designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. Focusing the role of Wylderne Ltd CBS on connecting its community more deeply with the Forest, is therefore well timed.

#### Community Support

Since the formation of Wylderne CBS and the opportunity to buy the Wilderness Centre, we have begun more structured community engagement, specifically with those groups that are major stakeholders in the community infrastructure, e.g. Forest of Dean District Council, the Forest Voluntary Action Forum, Hartpury College and University, Forest Economic Partnership, University of Gloucester, Growth Hub, Gloucestershire County Council, Forestry England and the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

We have also been sharing our ambitions for the business more widely and have noticed a sea change in how our stakeholders, visitors and our community are engaging with us. Many of the groups who visit the Wilderness Centre as part of its daily business are from the community and represent a healthy and diverse slice through the community i.e. schools, special needs groups, scouts, families, police, local authority, wildlife trust, NHS and businesses. Feedback and testimonials show there is widespread enthusiasm for the Wilderness Centre, as a not-for-profit entity, to re-join the community it left when sold by Gloucestershire County Council in 2014.

Initially we started speaking to teachers arriving with their schools to try to understand what lay beneath the motivation to choose the Wilderness Centre for their residential. All the responses were similar,

- *The children have great quality of contact with nature here*
- *It's not too far away but different enough that the children get a change in perspective (as you can see a large part of Gloucestershire and its topographical features from the site)*
- *As an invaluable resource to Gloucestershire's schools, the Wilderness plays a crucial role in the educational and recreational development of our children as well as many other school locally*
- *I've never visited a setting for a school residential as beneficial as the Wilderness Centre. The wide ranging activities on offer for the children not only promote the values that we as a school hold dear such as perseverance, resilience, independence and teamwork but are also engaging, educational and most importantly for the children, memorable and fun!*

What the head teachers and teachers were telling us was also echoed in what other visitors were saying as well whether parents, suppliers, members of other groups, many of whom had spent their own first nights away from home here.

This validating feedback has given us encouragement to further develop the potential of nature here, and to raise awareness of the role of the site within its wider Forest ecosystem. Just as important has been building trust with our schools such that they are not only confident that safeguarding rules will be

set up so that other groups can use the site at the same time, but that this could also be mutually enriching. We recently discovered this works well within a community context too when a Gloucestershire school was confident enough to agree to the local Gloucestershire Constabulary visiting during the school's residential to do some police dog-training. The police needed a crowd environment over lunchtime to simulate distraction while they trained their animals. Teachers told us afterwards that the experience was one the children really enjoyed and will remember all their lives.

We have been approached frequently by Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme groups who have few places to camp in the Forest, and by Scouts and Cadet Groups. This has also shaped our thinking about leaving space free for these groups. Forest School groups working with disaffected children, and schools for children with special needs, struggle to find places at reasonable cost. We recognise these are potentially long-term relationships and so have stepped up to help and have already had positive discussions with them about the children working on projects in the allotment garden.

Conversations with the Cabinet at the Local Council (Forest of Dean District Council) have encouraged us to develop plans for the Centre to extend our role into offering general eco-literacy to the local community (including to schools), and to become a training Centre for the skills predicted for local economic development as envisaged in the Council Plan (creating thriving communities, decarbonising, protecting nature and fostering a sustainable local economy.)

## Community Consultation and Engagement

In January 2024 we carried out community consultation running a Facebook poll. We wanted to understand what the community's knowledge and experience of the Wilderness Centre was, and did they have an appetite to engage more? Most respondents said they knew the Wilderness Centre, yet when asked, the smallest number of people responded positively to the question 'do you value it? A larger percentage wanted to visit the site more, and from the comments people made there was a clear sense that people wanted to have access to the site again.

Of the 270 people who responded, 25% said they lived in Gloucestershire. We concluded that these responses were a consequence of being a private company, largely closed to the community for the last 6 years.

Over the past year we have also visited the following local meetings to do informal consultation:

1. [Our Forest](#) meeting to discuss project ideas to send to the National Lottery for funding
2. Forest Economic Partnership
3. Forest Food Network
4. Have your say about the [Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)
5. Forest of Dean District Council Sustainable Economy Strategy Workshop

We found widespread enthusiasm for Wylderne Ltd CBS and have made connections including with the Forest Voluntary Action Forum.

Additionally, for the past year, the Head of the Wilderness Centre (who is also a Director of Wylderne CBS) has been doing an introductory presentation to private groups from the community (often on Saturday mornings) about the Wilderness Centre site and history, and the purpose of the CBS. The Blue Light Club, the Land Workers Alliance, Forest of Dean District Council Planning Department, WyeDean Tourist Board, Active Gloucestershire and Young People at Heart are some examples of groups who have attended. The total number amounts to approximately 400 people.

We have further Open Days planned for summer 2025 on 30 May, 7 June and 14 June.

Some examples of the partnerships we have created through our community engagement include:

PARTNER	How consulted	Partnership Arrangement	Stage of Development	Tangible examples of how involved	Supporting Evidence

Forest of Dean District Council	Presentation of proposed role to Cabinet and to Leading Group of Councillors	Delivery partner for Council Plan	Early stage: Cabinet to recommend approval for p'ship to full Council	Service Level Agreements	Wyderne fits in with a long-term Council plan for an environmental education centre
The Climate Action and Net Zero Partnership (subgroup of Forest Economic Partnership)	Regular meetings resulting from engagement with Forest Economic Partnership	Developing	Regular meetings	Wylderne is a local business, also with learning skills for the community	Hosting and running programmes
Forest Voluntary Action Forum	Dialogue started	Use of site for delivering FVAF services	Exploratory stage	Need expressed to us for a physical site	
Help for Heroes, Warrior Programme and Op Courage	Dialogue started	Collaboration on programmes for veterans	Exploratory stage	Facilitated activities	Recovery from PTSD, addiction, etc.
Forest Food Network	Framework agreement	Use of site as local hub	Formal arrangement to be signed	Drop off point for local veg boxes and local food signposting	Stated lack of physical hubs
Grazing Management (sponsored by Severn Trent Water)	Ongoing	Formal partnership	Agreed since Jan 2023	Herefordshire and Belted Galloway cattle all year-round grazing	Site connects stated aims of education, conservation and ethically sourced food
Blue Light Club	Existing partnership	Co-created programme linked to land connection	Service contracted by Glos Constabulary	Pioneering approach to mental health for first responders	
Ragman's Lane Farm	Dialogue started	Providing food	Exploratory		

Not only does the Wilderness Centre deliver benefits to the community but our proposals also deliver on several local strategic plans such as:

<b>LOCAL PLANS</b>	<b>PROPOSALS</b>
--------------------	------------------

<a href="#">Council Plan 2024-28</a> : A path towards thriving communities, decarbonising, protecting nature and fostering a sustainable local economy. Within the Plan the Cabinet has stated to us there will be a need for a local environmental learning centre.	Eco-literacy education - for school residents, youth and community groups
<a href="#">Mitcheldean Neighbourhood Plan</a> 2016 – 2026 identifies the need to protect the local character not only of the village itself but also the outlying open countryside and forested areas. It states that it does not support development in the sensitive outlying areas in order to protect the countryside, landscapes, rare ecology, valued views and character setting of the village.	Both of these objectives specifically name The Wilderness as an area to be protected. Community ownership will provide that protection.
<a href="#">Forest Food Network</a> The Network sits under Feeding Gloucestershire, a multi-agency partnership, convened in July 2021 whose ambition is to drive systemic change and build food security across all communities in Gloucestershire.	Become a hub for this Network in the Forest of Dean supporting food security across communities here.
<a href="#">Plans</a> for the Forest of Dean to become a designated UNESCO Biosphere Reserve	Eco-literacy education for the community
<a href="#">Inspiring the Forest</a> Raising awareness of the mix of businesses in the area and of the types of jobs available and increasing awareness of the skills required for jobs locally at all levels from apprentices to senior managers.	Become a Centre for training the skills needed for a sustainable economy.
<a href="#">Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Tourism</a> presentation made to Forest of Dean District Council Sustainable Economy workshop May 2024: seeking to attract (sustainable) slow tourists	Eco-literacy education for the community, including for local tourism business owners and local suppliers to the tourism sector.
<a href="#">The Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Board</a> is responsible for overseeing the development and delivery of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which aims to improve the lives of people in Gloucestershire. Their vision is that Gloucestershire is a place where everyone can live well, be healthy and thrive.	Through our existing outdoor activities we address 5 of the Board's 6 priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical activity</li> <li>• adverse childhood experiences</li> <li>• mental wellbeing</li> <li>• social isolation and loneliness</li> <li>• healthy lifestyles</li> </ul>
To be taught from September 2025 as set out in the Government's <a href="#">Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy</a>	Field study elements of Natural History GCSE.

After the end of the share offer period, membership will still be available to anyone who was unable to be part of the original share offer but would still like to join. As we continue to engage with the community we will ensure that anyone who would like to be a member has the ability to join. Collectively, as we build relationships with additional stakeholders and through a range of member activities including meetings, events, newsletters, open days and the AGM, we will

- Create a groundswell of engagement and activity
- Increase the reach, awareness and knowledge of our offering
- Increase networking with potential partners

- Appeal to those interested in 'not for profit' organisations and,
- Encourage involvement through membership of the CBS to have a voice as part of the planning and decision-making for the future of The Wilderness Centre.

As a community owned business there will be many opportunities to volunteer at the Wilderness. There will be a regular schedule of maintenance activities that we will provide guidance for so that volunteers can match their experience and physical ability. We aim to support as full a range of abilities as we can. As for the land, there will be many opportunities to work in the allotment and to take an active part in the wider land management plan that will create many new habitats for biodiversity. The Forest of Dean needs healthy forest clearings like the Wilderness for its long-term thriving and resilience to climate change. We envisage planting many more hedgerows and introducing both native and climate resilient plant species. Since this will be educational for both school and corporate, visitors these volunteering efforts will also help the business to continue to grow and thrive.

#### 4. Buying the Wilderness Centre

To buy the Wilderness Centre, Wylderne needs to raise £1,229,842. This is made up of:

Building purchase	1,030,000
Stamp Duty	41,000
Professional Fees	12,000
Repairs and Renovations	112,622
Loan arrangement fees	8,220
Share offer costs	6,000
Working Capital	20,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,229,842</b>

This capital investment will be focused on securing the asset freehold of the Wilderness Centre. The property has been valued at £1,030,000 by a Chartered Surveyor and heads of terms for the sale have been signed.

Over the last few years there has been limited investment in the fabric of the house and so we need to carry out repairs and renovations to improve the facilities for our visitors and to minimise any further deterioration. Costs will cover:

- Upgrading the electrics
- Emergency lighting in the house
- Replacement guttering
- Repair/replacement of roofs
- New windows
- Upgrades to the bathrooms
- Activity equipment

The purchase will be funded by a combination of community shares, loans, and grants. There are 3 scenarios depending upon how much is raised through community shares, these are as follows:

	Minimum	Target	Maximum
Community Shares	50,000	150,000	250,000
Resonance Loan	822,000	822,000	822,000
NoVo Foundation Capital Grant	257,842	257,842	257,842
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,129,842</b>	<b>£1,229,842</b>	<b>£1,329,842</b>

We have already received the capital grant from the NoVo Foundation and the loan from Resonance is confirmed and waiting to be drawn down.

As part of the purchase agreement, we will make a one-off payment of £72,000 in July 2026 to the current owner. This was part of the offer, vital to securing the deal and taking the Wilderness off the market. It represents a 7% 'community value' uplift on the Red Book Valuation of £1.03m. Wylderne was advised by an estate agent that it is accepted practice for a community asset, especially one as unique as the Wilderness, to have a 'community value' uplift. It is important to note we are not buying the current business that operates from the Wilderness Centre.

## 5. Our community share offer

In support of our efforts to buy the Wilderness Centre, we will be running a community share offer from 18<sup>th</sup> June to 25<sup>th</sup> July 2025. This share offer will aim to raise £150,000 of share equity.

### Targets

- Optimum target: £150,000
- Minimum target: £50,000
- Maximum target: £250,000

### Share Offer Structure

- Share Value: £1
- Minimum Shareholding: £50 (50 shares)
- Maximum Shareholding: £15,000

*The maximum interest rate has been set at 3%, to be payable from Year 3 if the society's trading performance allows, and for members to be able to withdraw up to 5% of the total value of the Society's share capital from year 5 onwards.*

As a Community Benefit Society, Wylderne has the ability to raise equity capital from its Members - both individuals and organisations - in the form of withdrawable share capital (community shares). This form of capital is extremely flexible and is a tried and tested way to fund the purchase and development of all sorts of community assets and co-operative businesses. Withdrawable share capital is not subject to regulation under the Financial Services and Markets Act, but the Society does need to submit an Annual Return to the Financial Conduct Authority outlining how it has delivered community benefit in line with its registered rules.

Withdrawable shares do attract a modest rate of interest to compensate the Members for the risk they are taking and offset the impacts of inflation upon the real value of their money. However, both the payment of interest and the ability to meet requests for withdrawals is at the discretion of the elected Board of Directors. Irrespective of how much is invested, each Member only gets one vote. The community share offer needs to raise enough money to meet the target, but also to ensure that no single individual can hold a disproportionate investment that might undermine the operation of the one Member, one vote democracy.

We plan to set our minimum share investment at £50, which is a level we feel will be accessible to most within our community.

We are offering members the option to spread investment payments by subscription, and we have applied for Co-operative and Community Finance (CCF) subscription underwriting scheme through community shares Booster Flex Programme. This will allow us to draw down up to £5,000 worth of finance at 0% to cover the value of the shares invested through the subscription scheme. We will then gather monthly investor share contributions throughout the following 10 months, repaying the finance total to Co-operative & Community Finance monthly throughout this period.

**For members who wish to purchase shares through the subscriptions scheme the minimum initial investment will be £5 with a commitment to reach a shareholding of at least £50 within 10 months.**

Allowing members to spread payments in this way will maximise fundraising potential amongst our community, in particular amongst those on low incomes, thereby increasing access to this investment opportunity.

We have a detailed community engagement plan for the Share Offer which can be found in Appendix 1 which will involve targeting members and supporters who have already pledged support, alongside other interest groups who are yet to be approached.



### **Community Shares Booster Programme**

We are being supported in the promotion of this share offer by the Booster Programme of Co-operatives UK, which is funded by the charity Power to Change and run by the Community Shares Unit.

We secured a Booster Fund grant of £9,870 for the costs of getting investment ready and launching a share offer which includes activities such as support in finalisation of business plan and share offer document, undertaking the Standard Mark assessment, design of a high-quality share offer document, and contribution to website set up and social media management.

We are applying for investment from the Community Shares Booster Programme ([www.communitysharesbooster.org.uk](http://www.communitysharesbooster.org.uk)). Under this programme, up to £50,000 is available to match applications for shares from the public. If successful, this would mean that for every pound invested by individuals up to £50,000, another pound will be invested in matched shares. We will communicate the outcome of this application online.

Any matched shares would be held by Community Shares ICOF, a partner in the Community Shares Unit, and will be subject to the same terms and conditions as other Wylderne CBS Members, except for Community Shares ICOF's right to withdraw share capital, which will be restricted to a pro-rata amount.

## 6. Organisational Structures

### CBS Legal Structure

Wylderne Limited is a community benefit society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority, registration number 9164, see [here](#) for details.

The Board governs the community benefit society which is a democratically owned and controlled social enterprise. Wylderne Limited CBS is

- Led by social purpose, where upholding our purpose is our primary objective
- Not for profit – all surplus income will be invested back into the CBS
- Asset locked – all assets belong to the CBS
- Democratically owned – every member has one vote
- Driven by Members – our Board is elected by and from the Members

Wylderne has two constituencies of Members, Community Members and Resonance. Any person over the age of 16 or an organisation can apply to be a Community Member.

A copy of the Wylderne rules can be found here ([LINK](#))

### Board of Directors

Members over the age of 18 can stand for election to the Board. The Board of Directors can have between 3 and 12 Directors. There must be between 3 and 9 Community Directors who have been appointed by the Members. There can also be up to 3 Independent Directors appointed for their skills or experience by the Board.

As this is a new organisation, at the first AGM in October 2025 the current Board will stand down and a new Board will be elected by the members to take the organisation forward. Retiring directors are eligible to stand for re-election, which the current group is committed to doing.

The Board is responsible for ensuring that the Wylderne conducts its affairs in accordance with the best interests of the CBS, its members, and the community it is set up to serve, taking account the views of Members and wider stakeholders.

The main responsibilities of the Board are to ensure

- Setting the strategic direction and plans
- Creating and overseeing a schedule for growth and development
- Best practice compliance, policy, and procedures are followed – Health and Safety, Risk Registers, Operating Policies, Safeguarding
- Identifying and applying for grants for growth and development
- Scheduling and implementing regular board and membership meetings.
- Managing the finances and accounts of the CBS
- Communicating with Wylderne CBS members.

Day to day management of the organisation is delegated to the paid staff team, reporting to the directors at monthly board meetings and through regular communication when working together on strategic projects.

The Wylderne's current Board consists of 4 Directors. Each is experienced in running their own businesses and having had responsibility for leading large operational functions and teams within employed roles, bringing together a wealth of commercial, sector specific and community experience. Each has also worked in the discipline of educational, environmental and personal development services with communities, children, teenagers and adults including outdoor education, leadership, learning and development, personal skills, etc. The Directors of Wylderne CBS are as follows and although the Board recognises it has collective responsibility, Directors have been allocated specific areas in which they are taking the lead.

- Simon Dawson: Outdoor Education, strategy, sales and marketing
- Jamie Robinson: Outdoor Education operations, policy and risk
- Paul Pivcevic: Bioregional Strategy and Partnerships, fundraising,

- Nicki Williams: HR & Recruitment, Learning & Development

#### **Simon Dawson – CBS Director**

Simon has been Head of Centre at the Wilderness for 5 years. Simon will oversee business strategy, sales and marketing. Simon began his career as an infantry officer and then worked in sales management for global telecoms companies. After that he built a consultancy practice that worked across sectors, private, public and charitable, helping senior leadership teams implement major change.

As a leader in the outdoors industry, his centre has achieved the Association of Heads of Outdoors Centres 'Gold Standard' award, the industry's leading accreditation.

He has a masters degree in *Learning and Change*, and has trained in regenerative practice with *Regenesi*s and in eco-literacy with the Capra Organization.

#### **Jamie Robinson – CBS Director**

Jamie has worked in Outdoor Education for 11 years and been Lead Instructor at The Wilderness Centre for 4 years. In this time he has led and facilitated the development of over 10,000 children. Working at a range of well-regarded centres across the South West - including Porthpean Outdoor Education Centre and Skern Lodge - he brings industry best practice to the operations at the Wilderness Centre.

In 2015 Jamie travelled to New Zealand to work for Ziptrek Ecotours, a company championing sustainable practice and messaging. Now living in the Forest of Dean as part of the community The Wilderness serves, his passion for people and nature to thrive cooperatively is a driving force in the realisation of the true potential held by The Wilderness Centre.

#### **Paul Pivcevic – CBS Director**

Paul will oversee our bioregioning strategy, key partnerships, fundraising and comms.

Paul is an experienced regenerative systems designer with two decades of experience in the leadership of organisational change in companies across Europe and the US, and a background in action research. He trained in regenerative practice with *Regenesi*s in 2019 and has been engaged in projects in a number of bioregions.

He has organised and led many community initiatives. In his former home in Bradford on Avon Paul led on the sustainability and land use theme within his community's Neighbourhood Planning process, and organised local consultations. This led to the Council awarding start-up support for a CSA project, and eventually to winning £80K of National Lottery funding and a weekly veg box scheme. In 2015 Paul set up the National Forest Gardening Scheme CIC to spread knowledge of edible perennial plants and their value for soils, and to encourage the spread of community forest gardens across the UK. Now living in Bath, he hosts a community inquiry into the City's 'story of place'. Paul's early career was as a journalist in print, radio and TV.

#### **Nicki Williams – CBS Director**

Nicki is responsible for overseeing personnel matters, including recruitment, staff development, Board appointments, and ensuring Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (E, D & I) goals are met. She also plays a key role in shaping and delivering market and project plans that serve the community.

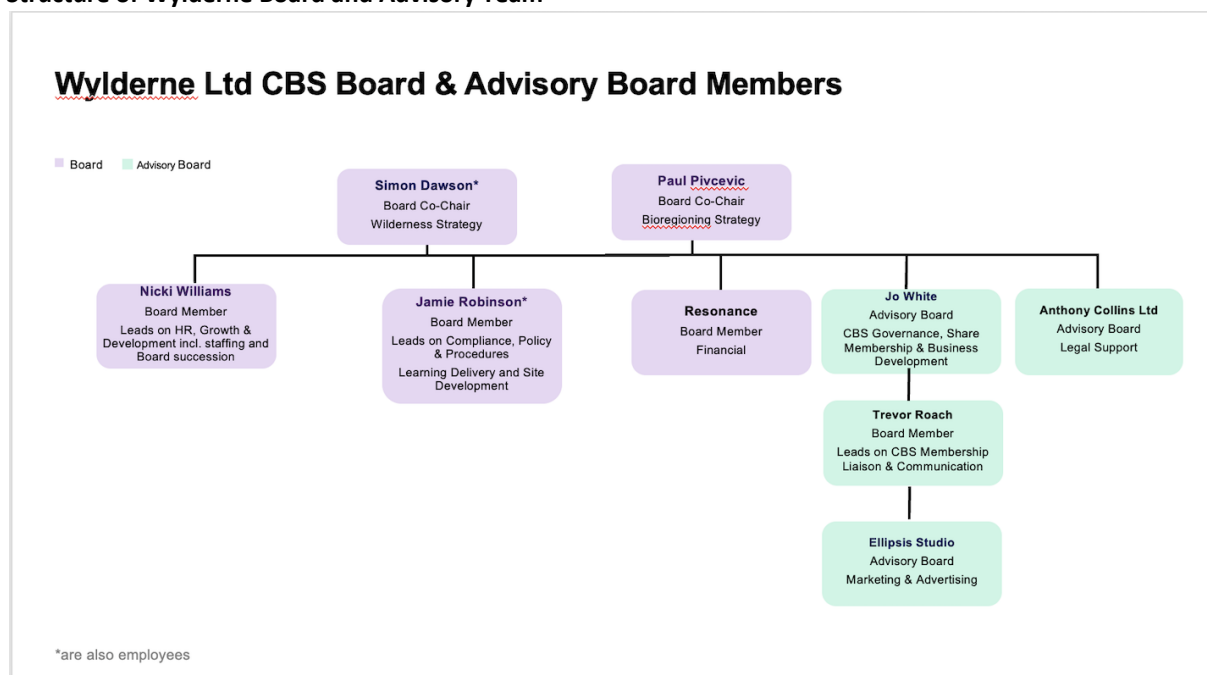
With a strong background in business and leadership development, Nicki is a qualified executive coach and mentor. Her career began in London's telecoms start-up scene, later moving to Sydney to help establish what is now Australia's largest mobile network provider. Returning to the UK, she shifted her focus to people development, holding senior HR and talent roles in Further Education and a FTSE 100 financial services firm. Now working independently, she specialises in executive development and career coaching.

## Advisory Group

As Wylderne CBS undertakes the buying of The Wilderness and transitions from a small organisation to a functioning CBS with a wide community membership, the Directors have recruited an Advisory group to work alongside them. The relevant skills and experiences of the Advisory Board include

- Legal advice: about the purchase of the Wilderness Centre <https://www.anthonycollins.com/why-choose-us/about-us/>
- Finance, CBS governance and business development - Jo White <https://futures.coop/>
- Marketing and Advertising – Huw Williams <https://www.ellipsis-studio.work/>
- Resonance Ltd: As a specialist social impact property fund manager and our loan provider, Resonance have been part of our Advisory Board and will form part of the Board of Directors once completion of purchase is achieved <https://resonance.ltd.uk/>

## Structure of Wylderne Board and Advisory Team



## Governance

The Board meets monthly to implement important decision making, with staff present to provide required information and relay progress on projects. The Board concentrates on setting the overall strategy of the Society and monitoring performance rather than the details of day-to-day operations. Undertaking an annual governance audit is a central task of the board to ensure that any gaps in skills and knowledge are identified and rectified through suitable training, and that succession plans are in place to manage the transition and turnover of new board members through the annual cycle stated in the society rules.

The Board can establish sub-committees and working groups that can include wider society members, helping to develop and strengthen the operations of the society, and involve members in the planning and delivery of community engagement activities.

Collectively the Board Directors and Advisory Board have experience of running a CBS/not for profit organisation; outdoor education centre; leadership and development programmes for schools, youth groups, corporates. Drawing on this knowledge they bring a wide range of commercial and community sector experience.

Specifically, in relation to the governance around the everyday operations of The Wilderness Centre and the CBS, the following procedures will be followed.

- Human Resources and employment supported by a staff handbook, employment contracts and job descriptions.
- Performance management will be managed through the rigour of role deliverables and performance reviews.
- Staff and organisational performance are the responsibility of the Head of Centre and will be overseen by our CBS Board, with staff reporting to the Board regularly on ongoing operations, providing information and updates where needed to make strategic decision making possible, and undertaking regular performance reviews to ensure targets are met.
- Financial controls and accounting managed through regular book-keeping using Xero Accounting systems to manage and reconcile invoices and payments and with an accountant who specialises in working with CBS and social enterprises organisations, to compile our annual accounts and society return. The Head of Centre, Office Manager and accountant will work together to scrutinise transactions, flag and prevent fraudulent financial activity. Financial procedures, procurement, anti-fraud and anti-corruption policies exist to ensure a clear framework exists around financial processes.
- Relationships with customers are managed by our Office Manager, who is responsible for initial conversations with new and prospective clients, contracting, issuing invoices and statements for payment.
- Comprehensive operational policies are already in place as is a Risk Register and Risk Assessments. Our Head of Centre, Senior Instructor and Head of Housekeeping undertake regular reviews to ensure work and residential spaces are being used safely and that controls are in place to ensure management of substances hazardous to health (COSHH registers). A studio-holder handbook and code of conduct are in place to ensure customers understand the procedures of the Wilderness Centre and CBS.
- As the CBS will be inheriting the bookings from Nature Schools for 2025/2026 and two of the CBS Directors are also employees of The Wilderness, there is a known conflict of interest. The recruitment of new directors is a priority and the two Directors who are also employees of the Wilderness will stand down once Wylderne starts operating. .

### **Board Growth and Succession**

Every year at the AGM one third of the elected Directors must retire but are eligible to stand for re-election up to a maximum of nine years. The Directors are drawn from and elected by the membership. Before each AGM the Board will promote standing for the Board and set in place processes for the elections.

Throughout the year Members will be encouraged to read minutes of meetings and visit The Wilderness attending events and open days. Feedback on their experiences will be encouraged and solicited and any governance issues identified will be addressed.

The Board will carry out a skills audit each year to identify any gaps and seek to encourage members with those specific skills and experience to stand for election. The Board has undertaken a skills audit of our existing resources and have identified the following initial gaps.

- Grants and Funding - ongoing
- Legal - ongoing

The Board may also create sub-committees, working groups, and/or task and finish groups which involve the wider membership, and this engagement often leads to members putting themselves forward for election and to be more involved in the society.

### **CBS Membership**

Members are those who own at least one share in the CBS. The Members own and control the organisation, and it is open to individuals and organisations that support the purpose of Wylderne Limited.

Membership is open to individuals over the age of 16, corporate bodies and unincorporated associations who support the society objectives.

Members hold Wylderne CBS accountable, to make sure it delivers its visions and mission. They help shape its direction and support its long-term success.

On 18th June 2025 we will launch our community share offer to raise capital towards the purchase of the freehold of The Wilderness and grounds. The minimum shareholding for the community share offer is 50. You can apply for membership on our website ([LINK to share offer page](#))

We will promote the share offer and membership by

- Open Days at the Wilderness Centre for the local community. Please contact [info@wylderne.com](mailto:info@wylderne.com) to arrange your attendance
  - 30<sup>th</sup> May 2025
  - 7th June 2025
  - 14th June 2025
- advertising on social media channels to the wider community
- communicating and promoting advertising to the community communication networks to the participants carers/guardians/parents (for those who may not have the capacity to engage with the complexities of a share offer due to the reasons they use our specialist services)
- Printed banners at community events

For more details please see our community share offer marketing, engagement and communications plan in Appendix 1.

### **The Wilderness Staffing and Operations**

The Wilderness Centre currently employs 5 people. The Head of Centre and Senior Instructor are full-time. The remainder are part-time or are, in the case of the housekeeping team, on annualised hours contracts.

The breakdown is:

- Head of Centre (full time): strategy, Responsible for: strategy, business management, financial management, sales and marketing, learning and development (master's degree level), people management, customer service, operations management (hospitality, outdoors education), DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion), activity instruction/facilitation (national governing body qualification), level 3 food hygiene, safeguarding lead.
- Senior Instructor (full time): Responsible for: operations, programme design and delivery; activity instruction/facilitation, activity programme design (national governing body qualifications, level 2 food hygiene, operations management (hospitality, outdoors education), repairs and maintenance, people management, customer service.
- Office Administrator (part time, 3 days per week/0.6 contract): Responsible for: bookings, finance, policies, operations management (hospitality, outdoors education), customer service, administrative systems.
- Housekeeping x 2 (annualised hours contracts): Responsible for: cooking for groups, food purchase, level 2 food hygiene, maintaining/cleaning large old house, customer service.

There are currently 2 vacancies which, given the uncertainty in the business over the past year, have not been filled:

- Housekeeping x1 (annualised hours contract): Responsible for: cooking for groups, food purchase, level 2 food hygiene, maintaining/cleaning large old house, customer service
- Maintenance operative x1 (part time, 3 days a week): Responsible for maintenance in the main house and tent village: managing gardens and allotment

The activity instructors and ecologists used on programmes are freelance, working on a daily rate. In practice the Wilderness Centre draws on a select pool of freelancers, people who know well the Centre's values and

ways of working and who are engaged in its vision. The freelance instructors have relevant national governing body qualifications and in-house training to cover the activities they run. They also undergo site-specific induction to understand the Wilderness' ways of working and any risks. The ecologists also bring relevant expertise (one has written 2 books) and local knowledge. They have a proven ability to engage a wide range of groups. They also work locally with the wildlife trusts and Forestry England.

Everyone on the team has enhanced DBS and has undergone safeguarding training.

The housekeeping team is accountable for maintaining Food Standard Agency 5 Star hygiene standards

### **Future Recruitment**

The staffing outlined above will continue in Year 1.

In addition, a full time Bio-regioning Lead position will be created. This role will be responsible for:

- Evolving Wylderne's role beyond schools and developing its strategy
- Community engagement in the Forest of Dean and Gloucestershire
- Stakeholder engagement, e.g. local authority, Forestry England, community businesses
- Identifying and pursuing funding opportunities
- Learning programme development (e.g. Regenerative Leadership, Doughnut Economics)

In Year 2, to develop capacity, we will require additional:

- 1 x housekeeping/cleaner (seasonal contract)
- 1 x instructor (seasonal contract)

### **Operational Risk Management**

Our risk management strategy, across the Wilderness Centre's domains, is a rigorous and structured approach to addressing risks, risk exposures, and risk events. It is a cyclical process in which risks are identified, assessed, managed, and monitored. This provides a way to continually update, and review assessments as new developments occur and then to take steps to protect the organisation, people, and assets.

As an outdoor education centre, we are accustomed to working with risk. Many of the outdoor activities we provide have an element of risk. Indeed, an aspect of the activity is often to give the participant the experience of 'perception of risk'. Our job is to manage the risk down to acceptable levels.

By taking a structured approach, we have reduced risks across the board. Of the identified risks, with mitigation, 73% are low risk and 27% are medium risk.

Access to our Risk Register can be found [here](#)

The risk register is broken down across the following categories: Project risks, Governance, Business Risks and Operational Risks.



## 7. Market and Trading Activities

There is currently an outdoor education business (Nature Schools Ltd) running from the Wilderness Centre owned by the owner of the site. Once Wylderne takes ownership of the site this business will cease operating. Wylderne is not buying the business, just the freehold of the Wilderness Centre.

As the future of the current business has been uncertain for several years, it has suffered from diminishing sales and a lack of investment. Because the Wilderness Centre's ownership was unclear, in 2023 the business lost the highly regarded Association for Heads of Outdoor Centres' Gold standard accreditation (which demands continuity of ownership and leadership). This accreditation is required by a number of schools and other public sector groups (e.g. police). This further reduced bookings. As a result of these factors the business has made a loss for the last three years.

However, the Wilderness Centre itself is renowned for the outdoor education opportunities it provides and Wylderne will be inheriting the legacy that comes with that which will give it a basis from which to build the business.

### Turning around

- The Wilderness Centre staff have worked hard to maintain standards, despite the situation above, and feedback from customers remains good. So, the Wilderness Centre still has a good reputation to build on. This means future communication (see below) is more likely to be welcomed and trusted. Our experience is people want to hear about the plans for the future and believe in them.
- The Wilderness Centre still has a high profile in Gloucestershire. The recent press coverage from BBC News and Punchline Gloucestershire shows that. Many people have visited over recent decades, often as children on school trips. More press releases will follow driving people to the website or contacting the office. We are also using Ellipsis Studio in Cheltenham for a PR campaign, getting the story out there through many different channels, aimed at target audiences.
- Without doubt there is still a Wilderness Centre customer base, especially schools, even if some didn't come in the last couple of years because of the current situation. The private groups base exists too, with some groups visiting for the fourth consecutive year.
- Wylderne will implement a sales and marketing plan. For example, every primary school in Gloucestershire, especially the ones who have been to the Wilderness, will be sent an information pack about the new situation and given follow up calls. Head teachers (and trip leaders) will be invited to visit and discuss what their plans are for different year groups. We will also go to visit them and give a presentation. The website will be updated, including with new materials about school trips (including video), making booking easier. There will also be new website information about private group visits. The Wilderness' online portals Group Accommodation and SquareMeal entries will be updated. Private groups who have been before will be sent an information pack and contacted about the new situation. There will be open days to give tasters of what groups experience.
- We will apply for AHOEC Gold accreditation as soon as there is clarity on ownership. We are already creating policies and procedures and updating qualifications needed for AHOEC's self-assessment questionnaire. We aim for the qualifying inspection to be in October 2025.

### Outdoor Education Residential Visits

Wylderne will provide programmes for primary and secondary schools, coming largely from the Forest of Dean and Gloucestershire.

School residential visits are a staple of the school calendar. They are seen as a key developmental experience for the children and most schools try to make them happen. Trips take place throughout the year, with the concentration being just before the Easter holidays and throughout the summer term. The beginning of the school year, September and October are also popular. That said the Wilderness Centre has regular visitors in January and February too.

The Wilderness Centre typically covers the ages Year 4 to Year 7, though many groups visiting are Years 4 and 5. In fact some teachers in Gloucestershire have said that hosting these year groups is the Wilderness Centre's niche, better than any competitor.

The market for Years 4 and 5 is driven by several factors. A venue that feels safe, contained and homely is attractive - a good fit for the Wilderness Centre with its archetypal English country house feel.

Secondly distance travelled matters, not only because of the increasing cost of coach hire but also because the proximity to home should a child need to be collected from the venue by parents. In these terms the Wilderness Centre is also a good fit, seeming a long way from home - in the 'wild' - while in fact it is less than an hour from Gloucester or Cheltenham. Finally, the ability to deal with a wide range of children's abilities, including special needs, is essential. Schools understandably want each individual child to have a positive experience.

Some local schools, in the Forest, overcome travel costs by doing parent drop offs and pick-ups at the Wilderness Centre. One school from Cinderford even walks to their residential trip. This is absolutely about being embedded in the community.

A school from a village outside Gloucester stays four days at the Wilderness Centre, year on year. On the final night of their visit teaching staff from the whole school are treated to a barbeque at the Wilderness, where the children show them around and talk about what they have done. This shows how important it is to make visits work for the whole school community, as well as the children. Teachers talk about how they see children in a different light when at the Wilderness Centre. Perceptions about 'difficult' children may shift when seen outdoors in Nature.

Residential programmes are typically from 1 to 3 nights. Each programme is bespoke, depending on the age of the children and the schools' and teachers' learning outcomes. That said, in general the outcomes cover:

- Self-reliance and confidence
- Communication skills
- Respecting and appreciating diversity
- Appreciating and understanding Nature and the local ecology
- Appreciating and understanding where food comes from
- Bonding as a team/class

The children will do a mix of on-site and off-site activities to meet these outcomes. On-site activities will include:

- High ropes elements
- Low ropes course
- Air rifles
- Archery
- Team building & problem solving (e.g. *Search & Rescue, Wilderness Explorer*)
- Bushcraft
- Wildlife safari & survey
- Forest walk (including bat detectors)
- Camp fire
- Working in the kitchen garden, meeting chickens and cattle

Off-site activities (with partner specialist organisations) include:

- Canoeing on River Wye (Symonds Yat)
- Mountain biking in the Forest

### **School Day Visits**

A worthwhile programme can also be delivered successfully on a day visit, drawing on the activities above.

While day visits are a useful alternative to residential trips, the relative cost of transport presents a barrier in terms of value for money. For this reason, at the Wilderness Centre, day trips are often done by schools with their own transport, e.g. special needs schools and independent schools. Day visit programmes are usually focused on a particular learning outcome, such as team building at the beginning of the school year.

Some local sixth form groups visit the Wilderness Centre on a day basis to do biology field studies, part of A Level Biology. As GCSE Natural History launches, we see this as an opportunity to extend these day visits to different year groups.

### **Group Bookings - hire of the house and grounds**

There is clearly lively demand for group accommodation, largely at weekends and during school holidays. This list above of groups visiting the Wilderness Centre is indicative of the diversity.

Group bookings are usually organised by one person acting on behalf of everyone. That is the person making the decisions, collecting the money, etc. Given the pressures that person might therefore experience, it is important to make the process as simple as possible. It also means being available and supportive while the group is on site. Typically, this means being much more hands on than, for example, AirBnB.

We feel it is important to inform and engage groups in the purpose of Wylderne and the Wilderness Centre. It is not just another venue, but part of a community and a bioregional learning centre. As much as possible this is done by talking to the group, either collectively or interacting with individuals during their visit, as appropriate. Also, there are displays in the main house.

The Wilderness Centre describes the accommodation in the main house as 'hostel style', i.e. with bunk beds in shared rooms, which seems to work for many groups, but not all. There is demand for single rooms that the Wilderness Centre cannot yet match. The plan is to meet that demand through a 'glamping' type of accommodation in the walled garden with pods instead of tents.

Groups also like the flexibility to bring their own tents and camper vans.

Feedback has been that the Wilderness Centre is almost unique in terms of accommodating large groups, towards 100 people. They like the variety of spaces, accommodation and space to spread out.

The house, tent village and grounds will be available for hire by groups from the community on a catered or self-catered basis. The Wilderness Centre is an ideal location to get together with like-minded people for a day or for a week.

In 2024/25 almost 1200 people visited. These include:

- Faith groups (Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Hindu) holding residentials.
- Friends and Family Groups for reunions and family celebrations.
- Arts & crafts groups holding residential and day workshops. Topics have included needle felting, fine art, music, theatre, film making and ceramics. Some groups have also been using craft as a vehicle for their interests, e.g. LGBTQ+, dementia, neurodiversity.
- Hobby groups including LARP (Live Action Role Play) and Gloucestershire Dog training (search and rescue).
- Wellness residential and day workshops including meditation, Gloucestershire Yoga and mental health for adults and children.
- Corporate residential and day events; Gloucestershire Business Apprentices, Gloucestershire Business Team building, Strategy Days.
- Conferences; disabilities charities, nature and outdoor organisations, Gloucestershire NHS, Wye Dean Tourist board, Gloucestershire Businesses, Local authority, Landworkers.
- Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, Prince's Trust.
- Refugee groups (children from Afghanistan)

Many of these groups also choose to make the best of the uniqueness of the Wilderness Centre by doing some of the outdoor activities mentioned above run by Wilderness instructors.

## Pricing

Below is an abbreviated Wilderness Centre 2024 price list to give a picture of the current main income streams. Wylderne will initially work with this price structure, but review as we go, striking the balance between viability and community purpose.

### Schools (per child)

- 1 night £120.00 (+VAT)
- 2 nights £220.00 (+VAT)
- 3 nights £330.00 (+VAT)
- Day visit £34.00 (+VAT)

Our research indicates that these prices are perceived as being in the 'reasonable' range, compared to other outdoor education centres.

Given the business overheads inherent in school packages, (food, instruction, fixed costs) margins vary from school to school, depending on group size (number of instructors) and time of year (heating). However previous analysis has shown a margin of 25% across the board is fair.

Many school bookings are for one class, around 30 children, but some schools send two classes at the same time, i.e. up to 60 children. Across Gloucestershire there are the large schools (typically in Gloucester and Cheltenham) and then the small rural schools. Being mindful of efficient use of capacity, when booking the small rural schools, which often come with less than 30 children, we aim to have another school on site at the same time.

### Private Hire (residential, self-catered)

- Main house £1100.00 (+VAT) per night
- Main house + Walled Garden camping £1400.00 (+VAT) per night
- Walled garden camping £700.00 (+VAT) per night
- Additional activities £180.00 (+VAT) per day for each group of 10

This pricing works well for groups of approximately 30+, when broken down between individuals which is why the Wilderness Centre gets the groups it does (see above). For large groups it is very good value - even cheap - and is therefore an area we want to review, perhaps putting in break points for the large groups of 80+.

### Key Drivers for income and growth

- The immediate driver for income is clearly through reinvigorating and expanding the customer base (schools and private groups) through the sales and marketing plan.
- At the same time the programmes at the Wilderness Centre have evolved over the past 2-3 years to being more ecologically grounded - with nature-connection being widely seen as vitally important to people of all ages. Schools especially want this more (e.g. Natural History GCSE is now going ahead). The Wilderness Centre's history included residential and day programmes involving environmental studies and we're implementing an updated version of that. We will be consulting with teachers to ensure that it is connected to the curriculum for different year groups, making them more attractive. Practically this will mean more ecology sessions interwoven with the classic outdoor education sessions.
- For adult groups we have innovated and piloted new products/programmes, e.g. Regenerative Leadership and Doughnut Economics. We can run these as corporate programmes during the week, or open programmes at weekends. This will start after the summer holidays.
- Finally, Wylderne has developed new ways to make more efficient use of the site, by having different groups at the same time. This increases revenue, as capacity is increased. Much of this has been achieved by experimenting with how the site is used more intelligently and getting feedback from customers (especially about safeguarding). For example, we can now do more concurrent use of the

main house and tent village/Farm Room. Also, we can have a special needs school visiting every weekday, while also having residential schools on site.

## Sales Projections

As mentioned above Wylderne is not buying the business currently based at the Wilderness, of which the Wilderness' owner is sole director and owner.

Through this business the Wilderness Centre is operating as an outdoor education centre. The customer base has therefore been maintained which means Wylderne will not be starting from scratch.

For example, in the past 12 months 35 schools have visited on residential trips, involving over 1200 children. Similarly self catered hire has numbered over 30 groups, mainly at weekends and during school holidays.

Working to a completion of the sale in July 2025, bookings being made beyond this date are entered in Wylderne's calendar. Invoices for these bookings will start to be sent by Wylderne's office in June 2025.

<b>Schools Residentials</b>	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
3 nights	650	850	750	750	750
2 nights	1300	1400	1270	1280	1280
1 night	555	625	300	300	300
Total nights	2505	2875	2320	2330	2330

<b>Youth Groups</b>	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Total nights - Youth	70	120	150	170	200
Total nights - Adults	8	11	15	15	15

<b>Self Catered</b>	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Manor House total nights	80	95	115	125	125
Whole Site total nights	13	15	19	19	20
Tented Village total nights	13	13	15	20	25
Day activities	234	314	325	330	335

## Inclusion

As we have said above, the nature of the groups that visit the Wilderness Centre means that diversity, equality and inclusion are integral to what we do. While the groups that visit are themselves diverse, within those groups there is frequently significant diversity.

This is especially true of the schools, representing as they do the diversity of rural and urban Gloucestershire. And within those school groups there are often children with special needs e.g. medical, mental health, physical abilities, neurodiversity, etc.

With this background, it is a fundamental principle for the Wilderness Centre that everyone is treated equally and everyone is included.

Practically, therefore, an indicative list of the questions we ask when groups book is:

- Abilities to engage in activities (physical, mental health, neurodiversity, etc.)
- How activities are briefed and run (language, culture, hearing, neurodiversity, etc.)
- Access to facilities (toilets, bathrooms, bedrooms, gender identity)
- Diets (religious, preferences, intolerances, allergies)
- Medical needs (medication)

- Mental health and neurodiversity
- Individuals' goals and preferences
- In all interactions with guests, we emphasise their inclusion and the respecting of their individuality and personal choices. We are as adaptable as possible.

Consideration for children's special needs is central to the design and delivery of the programmes. Most groups will have children with special needs, whether with a formal Education, Health and Care Plan or not. It is vital that inclusion is a principle throughout the process. This extends beyond physical and mental abilities, to dietary requirements as allergies and dietary preferences are now commonplace.

Since September 2024 the Wilderness Centre has had a Gloucester special needs school on site 5 days a week - based in the Farm Room - using the activities with their own qualified staff. It works so well for them they are clear that they want to continue this arrangement after the change of ownership.

We encourage parents whose child has special needs to visit the Wilderness Centre before their visit to see how it will work for them. Similarly, we often visit schools in person or hold online presentations to parents to help preparation and planning.

Gloucestershire is characterised by a comparatively small population of ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities). The 2021 Census showed the population of ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities) accounted for 44,765 people or 6.9% of the population; this was much lower than the England percentage of 19.0%. That said, some schools, e.g. from inner-Gloucester, do have more children from ethnic minorities. In meeting their needs, we are conscious of the systemic barriers ethnic minorities face in accessing and enjoying the outdoors in the UK, e.g. recognising that some children will not have the experience or cultural reference points of others.

Inclusion will be a principle in financial terms too, so that as many parents as possible are able to pay for their children to attend our programmes. There are many avenues we will explore, e.g. discretionary pricing, helping schools access funding and having a Wylderne bursary scheme. This is already happening at the Wilderness Centre (except for the bursary scheme) as schools often tell us that without financial assistance - a discount or funding - some children will not be able to join their classmates. Even from schools in areas that are perceived as being prosperous, e.g. the Cotswolds and Cheltenham, we receive these requests.

### **Terms of Business**

As mentioned above, typically bookings are made some time in advance. For schools it can be a year ahead.

The current terms of business at the Wilderness Centre are that a 20% deposit is invoiced on booking. The balance is payable 6 weeks before the visit. This seems to work for most customers and helps smooth cash flow. But as a community business we will be mindful of having terms of business that work for everyone.

### **The Competition**

Fifteen miles away at the edge of Gloucestershire is Hartpury University and [Hartpury College](#). The focus here is on A levels, degrees and postgraduate studies. It is among the UK's leading specialist education providers in animal, agriculture, business, equine, sport and veterinary nursing. Wylderne therefore differentiates itself currently and in the future through:

- Eco-literacy learning (school year groups up to 'A' Level; all age groups from the community)
- Natural History GCSE
- Skills training for the new economy
- Developmental programmes for sustainable business and B Corps

There are two other outdoor learning providers in the Forest of Dean that focus on schools:

1. The [Deanfield Outdoor Centre](#) owned and operated by Bristol City Council is a residential outdoor education centre based at Parkend. They offer outdoor pursuits and environmental field studies. Residential courses are for up to 72 people and day visits for up to 108 students at a time. The Centre does not have significant grounds and is oriented primarily towards Bristol schools.

2. The Christian Adventure Centre at [Viney Hill](#) in the Forest provides a range of outdoor activities for schools, youth and church groups. They can house 51 guests in the house: 72 in tents. Compared to the Wilderness, this Centre has limited capacity and promotes a clear Christian ethos which is not necessarily appropriate for some of the groups we work with.



## **8. Marketing and Communications Plan**

### **Website**

The aim is for the website to give a good understanding of what Wylderne Ltd is about as an outdoor education and bioregional learning centre. It will consequently, hopefully, encourage people to get involved in the CBS.

The website should inform customers in some detail about what is on offer and make the booking process as seamless as possible for them. This includes groups with special needs, that they see how it can work for them.

Finally, we want the website to build on the outdoors learning package by giving updates on the wilding programme, through the seasons.

These, therefore, are example sections:

- Describe the Wylderne purpose, structure and proposition
- Allow people to sign up as potential CBS members/shareholder
- Describe the Wilderness Centre, facilities, accommodation, etc.
- Describe education programmes and activities
- Downloadable school kit list
- Downloadable risk assessments, insurance documents, disclaimers, etc.
- Downloadable private group information pack
- Indicative price list
- Video describing school visits
- Video describing accessibility
- Availability calendar
- Booking enquiries portal
- Videos of 'Our Wilder Wilderness' through the seasons

### **Social Media**

The 'photo rich' nature of the Wilderness Centre makes social media (Facebook, Instagram and YouTube) a useful way to maintain engagement with an online community. As far as we can see, many people who follow us are in fact locals, from the Forest and Gloucestershire. For this reason, our social media also connects with local groups, e.g. the towns' Facebook groups, etc.

We have used Facebook polls as a community building activity, gathering opinions and ideas about what people would like to see at the Wilderness Centre.

LinkedIn has been used by us - especially Paul Pivcevic - to write articles about our work as well as more general regenerative and bioregional topics. This gives us a wider reach, to a different audience, helping to establish our credentials and connects us to potential customers, funders and partners.

### **Group Booking Platforms**

These are useful portals for group bookings. People visit these when they are looking for a venue for their event. At the moment, we plan to use:

- Group Accommodation: works very well, this has been a driver of large group bookings at the Wilderness Centre for years
- SquareMeal: this is new for the Wilderness Centre and is more business focused, targeting team away days, conferences, etc.

### **Press**

The profile and community goodwill around the Wilderness Centre means that press releases and news stories do get attention in local press. Most recently, in March 2025, BBC Gloucestershire, Punchline Gloucestershire and The Forester did interviews and ran stories following a press release about the sale.

We will continue to update these news outlets as the sale and relaunch progresses.

### **Marketing to Schools**

The Wilderness Centre has the advantage of 50 years' history as a provider of outdoor and environmental education in Gloucestershire. Schools, teachers and parents know about it, with many having personal experience. For this reason, communication can be direct and personal with phone calls and emails to school offices and head teachers.

There is an active word-of-mouth network amongst the schools which can be used to spread the word, particularly referrals to the Wilderness Centre. Some Gloucestershire head teachers have been active supporters of Wylderne's project, e.g. backing the Asset of Community Value proposal.

### **Marketing to Businesses**

Wylderne is an active member of the Forest Economic Partnership, a network of Forest of Dean businesses supported by the district council. We hosted their February meeting at the Wilderness Centre. We are also in contact with the local Growth Hub. The aim is that we get a consistent message across about what we can offer businesses and not-for-profits, both programmes and the Wilderness Centre as a venue.

### **Partnership Development**

We have been invited to play our role in the combined efforts of the District Council, local community, colleges and universities, business and environmental groups to apply for UNESCO Biosphere status. This has already resulted in a joint research project.

We continue to promote Wylderne through the following relationships and partnerships:

1. Membership of Forest Economic Partnership subgroups on Climate and Net Zero; and Learning and Skills
2. Working with the Council's Business Advisor and listening to the needs of local businesses to design learning programmes for business that meet the Council's ambition for a greener local economy
3. Engaging with key partners like Forestry England; Hartpury College and University; University of Gloucester to develop our learning offerings and participate in research

## 9. Finance

Wylderne Limited was registered in October 2023 and, as such, has only had one full year of trading. Although our trading year is 1<sup>st</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> August, our financial year for the purposes of the Financial Conduct Authority is from 1<sup>st</sup> November to 31<sup>st</sup> October. We are in the process of aligning these to have a financial year of 1<sup>st</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> August.

For the financial year 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 our accounts show:

Income	
Grants	£17,168
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£17,168</b>
Expenditure	
Bank Fees	£35
Consultancy	£11,752
Professional/legal	£3,307
Marketing	£2,074
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£17,168</b>
Profit/Loss	<b>£0</b>

We received grants paid in advance of £66,896 and on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 had £66,896 cash in the bank.

We have 4 members, who are the founder members, and have not paid for their £1 shares.

### Financial Projections

#### Assumptions

The following financial projections are based on the following assumptions.

- The financial year is from 1<sup>st</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> August
- A 20% deposit on bookings is paid 6 months in advance.
- The property depreciates at 2% per annum in a straight line
- Purchase price of £1,030,000
- Figures are exclusive of VAT as Wylderne is in the process of registering for VAT with HRMC
- An interest only loan of £822,000 for three years after which it is refinanced. The interest rate is 8%
- There is a loan arrangement fee of 1% (£8,220) which has been capitalised on the balance sheet.
- A revenue grant from the Novo Foundation has been agreed for 2025/2026. No future revenue grants are included in the projections.
- £150,000 community shares are raised
- Interest on shares is paid at 3% after 3 years
- 5% of shares are withdrawn every year after 2030
- A community value payment of £72,000 is made to the current owner in July 2026
- Inflation is 3%
- Wylderne will honour the bookings that have already been made without recharging the 20% deposits where they have already been paid.
- Premises costs include an annual budget for maintenance and repairs.
- The employment of the staff will commence on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2025.

Although the projections show the loan from Resonance being completely refinanced by another loan we may choose to hold another share issue at this point to reduce the amount of loan needed.

Note: The 2024/25 figures are the projected figures for this current financial year, 1st September 2024 to 31st August 2025.

## Profit and Loss - £150,000 community shares

### Income

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
School residentials	0	210,620	244,750	328,375	370,000	411,100
Youth Groups	792	7,746	8,250	15,275	19,200	22,550
Self Catering	1,672	85,686	115,300	138,900	180,400	212,800
Day Visits - Schools	7,040	25,049	25,975	24,478	26,470	27,210
<b>Total Trading Income</b>	<b>9,504</b>	<b>329,101</b>	<b>394,275</b>	<b>507,028</b>	<b>596,070</b>	<b>673,660</b>

Cost of Sales	297	77,300	80,451	82,865	85,350	87,911
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>£9,207</b>	<b>£251,801</b>	<b>£313,824</b>	<b>£424,163</b>	<b>£510,720</b>	<b>£585,749</b>

### Expenditure

Staff Costs	14,922	181,064	196,501	202,396	208,468	214,722
Premises Costs	2,858	66,200	68,096	70,049	72,060	74,132
Admin Costs	58,547	47,736	49,168	50,643	52,162	53,727
Share offer costs	6,000					
<b>Total Overheads</b>	<b>82,327</b>	<b>295,000</b>	<b>313,765</b>	<b>323,088</b>	<b>332,690</b>	<b>342,581</b>

<b>Operating Profit</b>	<b>-£73,120</b>	<b>-£43,199</b>	<b>£59</b>	<b>£101,076</b>	<b>£178,029</b>	<b>£243,168</b>
-------------------------	-----------------	-----------------	------------	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------

Depreciation	24,077	24,077	24,077	24,077	24,077	25,577
Share interest		0	0	4,500	4,500	4,275
Resonance loan interest	5,480	65,760	65,760	65,760	0	0
Refinanced loan interest		0	0	0	57,540	56,136
Community Value Payment		72,000	0	0	0	0

<b>Net profit</b>	<b>-£102,677</b>	<b>-£205,036</b>	<b>-£89,778</b>	<b>£6,739</b>	<b>£91,912</b>	<b>£157,180</b>
-------------------	------------------	------------------	-----------------	---------------	----------------	-----------------

Capital grants, gifts received	5,157	5,157	5,157	5,157	5,157	5,157
Novo	150,000	150,000				
Other revenue grant	9,870					
Donations made						
Corporation tax					22,038	34,724
<b>Profit transferred to reserves</b>	<b>£62,350</b>	<b>-£49,879</b>	<b>-£84,621</b>	<b>£11,896</b>	<b>£75,031</b>	<b>£127,613</b>

Cash Flow 2024/25				
	Sept to June	July	August	Total
<b>Opening balance</b>	75,721	305,683	60,865	
<b><i>cash in</i></b>				
Share capital		150,000		150,000
Loans/Mortgage		822,000		822,000
Capital grants	257,842			257,842
Revenue Grants	9,870		150,000	159,870
Income		1,394	12,785	14,179
<b>Total cash in</b>	<b>267,712</b>	<b>973,394</b>	<b>162,785</b>	<b>1,403,891</b>
<b><i>cash out</i></b>				
Fixed asset purchases		1,195,622		1,195,622
Loan arrangement fee		8,220		8,220
Share offer costs		6,000		6,000
Cost of goods sold		0	297	297
Overheads	37,750	8,370	30,207	76,327
Loan interest payment		0	5,480	5,480
Loan capital repayment		0		0
<b>Total cash out</b>	<b>37,750</b>	<b>1,218,212</b>	<b>35,985</b>	<b>1,291,946</b>
<b>Closing balance</b>	<b>305,683</b>	<b>60,865</b>	<b>187,666</b>	

	Cash Flow 2025/26												
	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	Total
<b>Opening balance</b>	<b>187,666</b>	<b>177,183</b>	<b>165,051</b>	<b>153,613</b>	<b>143,162</b>	<b>127,411</b>	<b>109,642</b>	<b>100,854</b>	<b>95,793</b>	<b>97,423</b>	<b>101,685</b>	<b>34,422</b>	<b>187,666</b>
<b>Cash in</b>	24,206	21,400	20,938	21,099	16,624	17,547	28,510	32,236	45,898	51,405	46,593	172,415	<b>686,537</b>
<b>Cash out</b>	34,688	33,532	32,376	31,550	32,376	35,316	37,298	37,298	44,268	47,142	113,857	30,361	<b>510,060</b>
<b>Closing balance</b>	<b>177,183</b>	<b>165,051</b>	<b>153,613</b>	<b>143,162</b>	<b>127,411</b>	<b>109,642</b>	<b>100,854</b>	<b>95,793</b>	<b>97,423</b>	<b>101,685</b>	<b>34,422</b>	<b>176,477</b>	

	Cash Flow 2026/27												
	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	Total
<b>Opening balance</b>	<b>176,477</b>	<b>167,237</b>	<b>159,275</b>	<b>152,431</b>	<b>148,669</b>	<b>138,242</b>	<b>127,788</b>	<b>124,780</b>	<b>123,876</b>	<b>129,509</b>	<b>144,912</b>	<b>158,157</b>	<b>176,477</b>
<b>Cash in</b>	27,395	27,420	27,600	29,430	23,390	25,930	38,102	38,547	49,308	65,244	58,078	33,391	<b>443,835</b>
<b>Cash out</b>	36,634	35,382	34,444	33,192	33,818	36,384	41,109	39,451	43,676	49,841	44,833	32,316	<b>461,079</b>
<b>Closing balance</b>	<b>167,237</b>	<b>159,275</b>	<b>152,431</b>	<b>148,669</b>	<b>138,242</b>	<b>127,788</b>	<b>124,780</b>	<b>123,876</b>	<b>129,509</b>	<b>144,912</b>	<b>158,157</b>	<b>159,232</b>	

	Cash Flow 2027/28												
	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	Total
<b>Opening balance</b>	<b>159,232</b>	<b>152,582</b>	<b>146,815</b>	<b>141,936</b>	<b>136,157</b>	<b>123,453</b>	<b>114,720</b>	<b>116,620</b>	<b>119,091</b>	<b>143,658</b>	<b>182,926</b>	<b>209,309</b>	<b>159,232</b>
<b>Cash in</b>	32,659	33,542	34,431	33,530	26,605	30,577	41,209	41,781	63,877	78,577	887,693	43,933	<b>1,348,413</b>
<b>Cash out</b>	39,309	39,309	39,309	39,309	39,309	39,309	39,309	39,309	39,309	39,309	861,309	39,309	<b>1,293,712</b>
<b>Closing balance</b>	<b>152,582</b>	<b>146,815</b>	<b>141,936</b>	<b>136,157</b>	<b>123,453</b>	<b>114,720</b>	<b>116,620</b>	<b>119,091</b>	<b>143,658</b>	<b>182,926</b>	<b>209,309</b>	<b>213,932</b>	

Cash Flow 2025 to 2030						
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Opening balance	75,721	187,666	176,477	124,600	166,352	268,109
Total cash in	1,403,891	498,871	408,099	1,335,464	601,889	675,788
Total cash out	1,291,946	510,060	459,976	1,293,712	500,132	617,121
Closing balance	187,666	176,477	124,600	166,352	268,109	326,776

#### Balance Sheet - £150,000 Community Shares

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Tangible fixed assets	1,179,765	1,155,688	1,131,611	1,107,535	1,083,458	1,132,881
<b>TOTAL FIXED ASSETS</b>	<b>1,179,765</b>	<b>1,155,688</b>	<b>1,131,611</b>	<b>1,107,535</b>	<b>1,083,458</b>	<b>1,132,881</b>
Cash in bank	187,666	176,477	124,600	166,352	268,109	326,776
<b>Current Assets</b>	<b>187,666</b>	<b>176,477</b>	<b>124,600</b>	<b>166,352</b>	<b>268,109</b>	<b>326,776</b>
Corporation tax	0	0	0	0	22,038	34,724
Short term liabilities	0	0	822,000	24,551	25,955	27,231
Prepaid Deposits	4,675	24,445	38,269	44,705	50,525	52,652
<b>Current Liabilities</b>	<b>4,675</b>	<b>24,445</b>	<b>860,269</b>	<b>69,256</b>	<b>98,517</b>	<b>114,607</b>
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	<b>182,991</b>	<b>152,032</b>	<b>(735,669)</b>	<b>97,095</b>	<b>169,592</b>	<b>212,168</b>
Capital Grants	252,685	247,528	242,371	237,215	232,058	226,901
Resonance	822,000	822,000		0	0	0



Refinance loan		0	0	801,949	780,494	757,538
<b>Long term liabilities</b>	<b>1,074,685</b>	<b>1,069,528</b>	<b>242,371</b>	<b>1,039,164</b>	<b>1,012,552</b>	<b>984,439</b>
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>288,071</b>	<b>238,192</b>	<b>153,571</b>	<b>165,466</b>	<b>240,497</b>	<b>360,610</b>
<i>represented by:</i>						
Share capital	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	142,500
Reserves (retained profit)	138,071	88,192	3,571	15,466	90,497	218,110
<b>TOTAL CAPITAL &amp; RESERVES</b>	<b>288,071</b>	<b>238,192</b>	<b>153,571</b>	<b>165,466</b>	<b>240,497</b>	<b>360,610</b>

## Other Financial Scenarios

We have the finance in place to complete the purchase of the building and land but there are some essential repairs that need to be carried out to enable us to continue to operate safely and there are additional renovations and improvements that can be made that will make visiting the Wilderness Centre more attractive which will mean our ability to generate an income will be greater.

We have costed the repairs, renovations and improvements and depending on how much we raise through the share offer will enable us to carry out the following:

Minimum of £50,000 – essential work	Target £150,000 Additional to the £50,000 work	Maximum £250,000 Additional to the £150,000
Electrics Roofing and guttering repairs Heating system Fire doors Bedroom repairs and refurbishments New beds and mattresses High ropes/crate stack equipment and training Activities kit uplift	Farm room improvements – roof repairs, windows, door, etc Windows/Fire door in ballroom Windows in Wardens cottage Downstairs furniture Tree climbing kit and training Upstairs bathroom Bedroom refurbishment Solar panel re-connect for hot water Community accessible space and community orchard set up Jacobs ladder kit and training	Walled Garden – installation of cabins and toilets/shower block Marquee replacement building - communal cooking & eating, learning & meeting space

If the share offer raises a figure between the minimum and maximum targets, the level of repairs and renovations will be flexed accordingly. In all three scenarios we have projected that we will pay interest at 3% from year 3 and allow withdrawals of shares from year 5. However, these are dependent on the performance of the business and so the more work we can undertake to improve the house and facilities the more attractive The Wilderness Centre will be to visit and so increase our income generating options.

**If we do not raise the minimum of £50,000, it will take all our funds to complete the purchase. This will make the business very vulnerable to trading shocks and we will have to seek grant funding for essential repairs to continue to operate safely.**

## Appendix 1: Community Share Offer Marketing, Communications and Engagement Plan

### Wylderne - breathing new life into The Wilderness, Mitcheldean

#### Marketing, Communications and Engagement Plan

The purpose of this plan is to set out the communications strategy and marketing activity that will be undertaken by Wylderne to support a Community Share Offer due to be launched in June 2025.

#### Target

- To raise a maximum of £250,000 to ensure that once the Wilderness is purchased, Wylderne can deliver on its promise to be an asset to the whole community. It will take all our funds to complete the purchase. In order to start operating safely, and to deliver on our promise to be an asset to the whole community we need support for essential repairs and upgrading of the main house at the Wilderness, including the roofs, bathrooms, bedrooms, lighting, decorating, bringing in adult friendly furniture, upgrading the accommodation for adult use, installing an efficient heating system, building alternative learning and workshop space so the site can accommodate multiple groups simultaneously; planting further food growing areas to serve also as outdoors classroom spaces; upgrading the campfire areas.

#### Key Aims

- To communicate that generations of local children are now assured to have a local outdoor learning centre with all the benefits for their well being for generations to come. But the place needs immediate attention.
- To get the message across that the funds that have made the purchase possible are conditional on the Wilderness becoming an asset for the whole community
- For that to happen we will need local people's support to invest in essential repairs and upgrades across the whole site. Both children and adults will benefit.
- To get the community excited about the potential of this asset and how future generations will benefit
- To create a broad base of membership that is representative of our Forest community

#### Target audiences

- **Current customers** of the Wilderness – likely to be parents of children who have had a residential experience at the Wilderness and may have younger children at home who will visit in the future. The Wilderness caters for 2000 school children a year. Their age range will span 25-45 but since younger families generally experience greater financial pressure they are likely to contribute more towards the lower end of the investment range. They are most likely to get their local news via social media.
- **Past customers** of the Wilderness possibly with older children at home who have had a good experience at the Wilderness, but who also have fond memories of their own visit too. Their age range is likely 40's to 60's with more disposable income and therefore can contribute more than the minimum. They may have more time to scan the range of local media platforms and listen to local radio. These first two groups will be found across Gloucestershire, not only in the Forest.
- **Members of local community groups** who understand the value both of strengthening community and of nature connection, and are excited at the prospect of being able to visit the Wilderness. This group is most likely to be scanning local Forest media. Many of these groups will have attended the

open day at the Wilderness last summer. This group can be reached through their newsletters or by direct email.

- **Members of local institutions and partnerships** who understand the potential for Wylderne to raise awareness and literacy of nature and its link to the distinct Forest story, some because they see the link to a new economy, others who see it as a useful meeting place in an iconic spot, still others who link the raising of ecoliteracy with the potential economic and social benefit from the Forest achieving a Biosphere designation. We can reach this cohort through their newsletters or by direct email.

**Local Councillors** Public support from local Councillors will be helpful. They can be reached through our existing networks.

- **Local celebrity endorsements?**
- **Enthusiasts in wealthier parts of Gloucestershire** but also the wider country who appreciate the pioneering bioregioning mission of Wylderne, and its plans for the Wilderness. These people will be advocates for a faster transition to a greener, more localised economy and will respond to messages about the potential for the Forest - once a poster child for the extractive economy - to become a leader of the new one. Acorn analysis prepared for Gloucestershire County Council in 2024 revealed several areas within Gloucestershire as exhibiting strong environmental awareness: the Cotswold district, Tewkesbury, and Stroud are particularly notable for higher likelihood of residents believing climate change is a major threat and adopting environmentally conscious lifestyles like veganism. National press would be helpful here, but also seeding the message with local influencers, key groups and convening businesses (like Stroud Brewery) within each of the local areas above.

## Key Messages

1. Help us breath life back into the Wilderness
2. Your support will ensure the experience of future generations of children is secure
3. The Wilderness is to be a nature-connection and learning centre for the whole community: all age groups welcome

## Marketing

Our messaging will be brought to life and amplified by adopting the following strategy and using the following platforms, channels and timelines.

### The Environment

We will make the best use of the house and the stunning grounds by holding events and promotions at the Wilderness where we can demonstrate the many uses and facilities that the Wilderness has to offer.

### Campaign Video

We will create a compelling, informative campaign video where we set out our vision for the future of the Wilderness, our campaign proposition, and how we aim to achieve our goal. The purpose of the video is to inform, engage and motivate people to want to get involved and become a vital part of the Wilderness community. The video will form a central pillar of our communications strategy and will be a key tool used at events, hosted on our website and shared across all digital media. We will also edit the video to create content for other channels such as Instagram reels, TikTok, and for Media channels and influencers to extend the reach of our campaign.

### Cut Downs and edits

As explained above, we will produce shorter edits for distribution to media outlets and influencers as well as for use on our own digital platforms to ensure content is kept fresh and relevant.

### **The Website**

The website forms another central pillar of our campaign. It is the hub and all communication traffic will drive people to the website and to the Crowdfunder site.

We will update the homepage to clearly lay out our proposition in a clear, compelling and persuasive way, with links to further information and the share offer in more detail. The site will host the campaign video as well as a downloadable PDF of the share offer.

### **Posters and Flyers**

We will make use of eye-catching posters (A3 and A4 full colour) and flyers (double-sided, full colour) in and around the local environment to spread awareness and inform the local community of events, activities, meetings, and ways to get involved. They will be placed in areas of heavy pedestrian traffic with long dwell times, so can afford to be information heavy, as well as putting forward our message in a compelling and persuasive fashion. Use of QR codes and bullet points will drive traffic to the website for more detailed information and the share offer document.

Posters - shops, cafes, bars, community centre notice boards, sports and clubs

Flyers - Hand out to local businesses, outside supermarkets and shops.

### **The Share Offer Document**

The Share Offer Document will form the third pillar of our campaign. It will be a sales pitch for potential Shareholder Members to get involved and invest in our vision. It will not only lay out the mechanics of the offer but also outline the broader vision for the Wilderness. As with every asset of the marketing campaign, it will be branded to reflect our vibrant, creative and visionary attitude, and written in our compelling, persuasive, and engaging tone of voice. The document will be downloadable from our website and also available in print form. These will be distributed at the events detailed below.

### **Social Media**

We will engage with our core followers across all social media channels, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and TikTok, producing content, photography, cut downs of our campaign video and uploading footage from events and interviews with our Founders. We will push news items and stories, as well as repost articles where Wylderne have been mentioned in the press. The plan would be to post tailored content at least once a week, using hashtags to lead back to the share offer.

Like all of our marketing assets, the timeline would consist of Awareness, Interest, Information, Persuasion and Conversion.

### **Digital**

We will use banner advertising on Reach Media-owned local news websites, such as Gloucestershire Live or Forest of Dean News. The banner will also appear on the home page of the website with a link to the investment platform.

Post key messages to <https://wildstroud.org/events/>, to Transition Stroud <https://transitionstroud.org/> to Green-minded people in Tewkesbury <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1442586902708214/>

**Email newsletters**

Weekly newsletters to our database of existing clients, schools, and businesses containing updates, promotions, activities, interviews and ways to participate

**Blog posts and articles**

Sharing content, information and news to attract and engage our target audience. We will organise interviews with local journalists and write thought pieces/opinion pieces where we can expand upon our vision and establish Wylderne and the team behind Wylderne as passionate experts in the field of conservation, nature and biodiversity.

**Print Advertising/Advertorials**

Use print to raise awareness of the Wilderness and our vision for its future. Quarter-page adverts in local press and half-page advertorials to spread our message further.

**Types of Press to Target**

As well as local press and media we aim to ladder up our communication strategy and get on the radar of the national press.

Local press - Gloucestershire Live, The Wilts and Glos Standard, The Gazette, The Forester,

National Press - The Guardian, Observer, The Times, Financial Times

TV and Radio - BBC South West and BBC Radio Gloucestershire.

**Photography**

We will create a library of photo imagery for use across all forms of media to ensure our visuals are on brand and add to our messaging. They will tell our story in an engaging, compelling way that will grab attention and move people.

**Media Pack**

Produce a 'ready-to-use' media-friendly pack containing all relevant resources, photography, interviews, information and sound bites for journalists, bloggers and influencers.

Google Drive containing hi-res and low-res jpg, full colour photo imagery. Portrait and landscape options and Team member portraits.

**Influencers**

Pitch to Olly Alexander, who spent time at the Wilderness as a local schoolboy.

Invite him and others to come and do a photoshoot at the Wilderness and interview them about their fond memories of the place.

**Timeline**

Like all of our marketing assets, the marketing timeline would consist of an Awareness, Interest, Information, Persuasion and Conversion phase.

## **Start Date 12th May 2025**

### **Awareness Phase (in progress)**

Website

Email Newsletter

Social Media

Local News

Events at the Wilderness

**18th May** - Our Forest meeting at the Speech House

### **Information Phase**

Campaign Video

Press TV and Radio

Posters and Flyers

Events at the Wilderness

**25th May** - Forest Of Dean Spring Food Festival at Speech House

### **Persuasion Phase**

Blog posts and articles

Influencers

Events at the Wilderness

**11th June** - Forest Economic Partnership Innovation Awards Ceremony, Lydney Town Hall

**14th June** - Coleford Brass Festival

## **Launch Date 18th June 2025 - event at Wilderness**

### **Follow-up**

#### **events**

**19th June** - Stroud Small People Planet Pint Sustainability meet-up

**28th June** - Summer Fair at the Dean Heritage Centre

**13th & 14th June** - Coleford Music Festival

**18th - 20th June** - Mitcheldean Festival

**20th July** - Cinderford Pride

**Countdown phase** to the deadline 25th July

## Appendix 2: Other Financial Scenarios

### 1. Community Shares - £50,000

#### Profit and Loss - £50,000 community shares

##### Income

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
School residentials	0	210,620	244,750	328,375	370,000	411,100
Youth Groups	792	7,746	8,250	15,275	19,200	22,550
Self Catering	1,672	85,686	115,300	138,900	180,400	212,800
Day Visits - Schools	7,040	25,049	25,975	24,478	26,470	27,210
<b>Total Trading Income</b>	<b>9,504</b>	<b>329,101</b>	<b>394,275</b>	<b>507,028</b>	<b>596,070</b>	<b>673,660</b>
Cost of Sales	297	77,300	80,451	82,865	85,350	87,911
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>£9,207</b>	<b>£251,801</b>	<b>£313,824</b>	<b>£424,163</b>	<b>£510,720</b>	<b>£585,749</b>

##### Expenditure

Staff Costs	14,922	181,064	196,501	202,396	208,468	214,722
Premises Costs	2,858	66,200	68,096	70,049	72,060	74,132
Admin Costs	58,547	47,736	49,168	50,643	52,162	53,727
Share offer costs	6,000					
<b>Total Overheads</b>	<b>82,327</b>	<b>295,000</b>	<b>313,765</b>	<b>323,088</b>	<b>332,690</b>	<b>342,581</b>

<b>Operating Profit</b>	<b>-£73,120</b>	<b>-£43,199</b>	<b>£59</b>	<b>£101,076</b>	<b>£178,029</b>	<b>£243,168</b>
-------------------------	-----------------	-----------------	------------	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------

Depreciation	22,077	22,077	22,077	22,077	22,077	23,577
Share interest		0	0	1,500	1,500	1,425
Resonance 1 interest	5,480	65,760	65,760	65,760	0	0
Refinanced loan interest		0	0	0	57,540	56,136
Community Value payment		72,000	0	0	0	0
<b>Net profit</b>	<b>-£100,677</b>	<b>-£203,036</b>	<b>-£87,778</b>	<b>£11,739</b>	<b>£96,912</b>	<b>£162,030</b>

Capital grants, gifts received	5,157	5,157	5,157	5,157	5,157	5,157
Novo	150,000	150,000				
Other revenue grant	9,870					
Donations made						
Corporation tax					22,608	35,265
<b>Profit transferred to reserves</b>	<b>£64,350</b>	<b>-£47,879</b>	<b>-£82,621</b>	<b>£16,896</b>	<b>£79,461</b>	<b>£131,921</b>



	Cash Flow 2026-2030					
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
<b>Opening balance</b>	<b>75,721</b>	<b>187,666</b>	<b>176,477</b>	<b>124,600</b>	<b>166,352</b>	<b>271,109</b>
<b>Total cash in</b>	1,303,891	498,871	408,099	1,335,464	601,889	675,788
<b>Total cash out</b>	1,191,946	510,060	459,976	1,293,712	497,132	609,691
<b>Closing balance</b>	<b>187,666</b>	<b>176,477</b>	<b>124,600</b>	<b>166,352</b>	<b>271,109</b>	<b>337,206</b>

#### Balance Sheet - £50,000 Community Shares

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Tangible fixed assets (building)	1,081,765	1,059,688	1,037,611	1,015,535	993,458	1,044,881
<b>TOTAL FIXED ASSETS</b>	<b>1,081,765</b>	<b>1,059,688</b>	<b>1,037,611</b>	<b>1,015,535</b>	<b>993,458</b>	<b>1,044,881</b>
Cash in bank	187,666	176,477	124,600	166,352	271,109	337,206
<b>Current Assets</b>	<b>187,666</b>	<b>176,477</b>	<b>124,600</b>	<b>166,352</b>	<b>271,109</b>	<b>337,206</b>
Corporation tax	0	0	0	0	22,608	35,265
Short term liabilities	0	0	822,000	21,551	22,955	24,381
Pre-paid Deposits	4,675	24,445	38,269	44,705	50,525	52,652
<b>Current Liabilities</b>	<b>4,675</b>	<b>24,445</b>	<b>860,269</b>	<b>66,256</b>	<b>96,087</b>	<b>112,299</b>
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	<b>182,991</b>	<b>152,032</b>	<b>(735,669)</b>	<b>100,095</b>	<b>175,022</b>	<b>224,907</b>
Capital Grants	252,685	247,528	242,371	237,215	232,058	226,901
Resonance	822,000	822,000		0	0	0
Refinance loan		0	0	801,949	780,494	757,538
<b>Long term liabilities</b>	<b>1,074,685</b>	<b>1,069,528</b>	<b>242,371</b>	<b>1,039,164</b>	<b>1,012,552</b>	<b>984,439</b>
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>190,071</b>	<b>142,192</b>	<b>59,571</b>	<b>76,466</b>	<b>155,927</b>	<b>285,349</b>
<i>represented by:</i>						
Share capital	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	47,500
Reserves (retained profit)	140,071	92,192	9,571	26,466	105,927	237,849
<b>TOTAL CAPITAL &amp; RESERVES</b>	<b>190,071</b>	<b>142,192</b>	<b>59,571</b>	<b>76,466</b>	<b>155,927</b>	<b>285,349</b>

## 2. Community Shares - £250,000

### Profit and Loss - £250,000 Community Shares

## Income

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
School residentials	0	210,620	244,750	328,375	370,000	411,100
Youth Groups	792	7,746	8,250	15,275	19,200	22,550
Self Catering	1,672	85,686	115,300	138,900	180,400	212,800
Day Visits - Schools	7,040	25,049	25,975	24,478	26,470	27,210
<b>Total Trading Income</b>	<b>9,504</b>	<b>329,101</b>	<b>394,275</b>	<b>507,028</b>	<b>596,070</b>	<b>673,660</b>
Cost of Sales	297	77,300	80,451	82,865	85,350	87,911
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>£9,207</b>	<b>£251,801</b>	<b>£313,824</b>	<b>£424,163</b>	<b>£510,720</b>	<b>£585,749</b>

## Expenditure

Staff Costs	14,922	181,064	196,501	202,396	208,468	214,722
Premises Costs	2,858	66,200	68,096	70,049	72,060	74,132
Admin Costs	58,547	47,736	49,168	50,643	52,162	53,727
Share offer costs	6,000					
<b>Total Overheads</b>	<b>82,327</b>	<b>295,000</b>	<b>313,765</b>	<b>323,088</b>	<b>332,690</b>	<b>342,581</b>

<b>Operating Profit</b>	<b>-£73,120</b>	<b>-£43,199</b>	<b>£59</b>	<b>£101,076</b>	<b>£178,029</b>	<b>£243,168</b>
-------------------------	-----------------	-----------------	------------	-----------------	-----------------	-----------------

Depreciation	26,077	26,077	26,077	26,077	26,077	27,577
Share interest		0	0	7,500	7,500	7,125
Resonance 1 interest	5,480	65,760	65,760	65,760	0	0
Refinanced loan interest		0	0	0	57,540	56,136
Community Value Payment		72,000	0	0	0	0

<b>Net profit</b>	<b>-£104,677</b>	<b>-£207,036</b>	<b>-£91,778</b>	<b>£1,739</b>	<b>£86,912</b>	<b>£152,330</b>
-------------------	------------------	------------------	-----------------	---------------	----------------	-----------------

Capital grants, gifts received	5,157	5,157	5,157	5,157	5,157	5,157
Novo	150,000	150,000				
Other revenue grant	9,870					
Corporation tax					21,468	34,182
<b>Profit transferred to reserves</b>	<b>£60,350</b>	<b>-£51,879</b>	<b>-£86,621</b>	<b>£6,896</b>	<b>£70,601</b>	<b>£123,304</b>

	Cash Flow 2026-2030					
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
<b>Opening balance</b>	75,721	187,666	176,477	124,600	166,352	265,109
<b>Total cash in</b>	1,503,891	498,871	408,099	1,335,464	601,889	675,788
<b>Total cash out</b>	1,391,946	510,060	459,976	1,293,712	503,132	624,551
<b>Closing balance</b>	<b>187,666</b>	<b>176,477</b>	<b>124,600</b>	<b>166,352</b>	<b>265,109</b>	<b>316,346</b>

## Balance Sheet - £250,000 Community Shares

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Tangible fixed assets (building)	1,277,765	1,251,688	1,225,611	1,199,535	1,173,458	1,220,881

<b>TOTAL FIXED ASSETS</b>	<b>1,277,765</b>	<b>1,251,688</b>	<b>1,225,611</b>	<b>1,199,535</b>	<b>1,173,458</b>	<b>1,220,881</b>
Cash in bank	187,666	176,477	124,600	166,352	265,109	316,346
<b>Current Assets</b>	<b>187,666</b>	<b>176,477</b>	<b>124,600</b>	<b>166,352</b>	<b>265,109</b>	<b>316,346</b>
Corporation tax	0	0	0	0	21,468	34,182
Short term liabilities	0	0	822,000	27,551	28,955	30,081
Pre-paid Deposits	4,675	24,445	38,269	44,705	50,525	52,652
<b>Current Liabilities</b>	<b>4,675</b>	<b>24,445</b>	<b>860,269</b>	<b>72,256</b>	<b>100,947</b>	<b>116,916</b>
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	<b>182,991</b>	<b>152,032</b>	<b>(735,669)</b>	<b>94,095</b>	<b>164,162</b>	<b>199,430</b>
Capital Grants	252,685	247,528	242,371	237,215	232,058	226,901
Resonance	822,000	822,000		0	0	0
Refinance loan		0	0	801,949	780,494	757,538
<b>Long term liabilities</b>	<b>1,074,685</b>	<b>1,069,528</b>	<b>242,371</b>	<b>1,039,164</b>	<b>1,012,552</b>	<b>984,439</b>
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>386,071</b>	<b>334,192</b>	<b>247,571</b>	<b>254,466</b>	<b>325,067</b>	<b>435,872</b>
<i>represented by:</i>						
Share capital	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	237,500
Reserves (retained profit)	136,071	84,192	(2,429)	4,466	75,067	198,372
<b>TOTAL CAPITAL &amp; RESERVES</b>	<b>386,071</b>	<b>334,192</b>	<b>247,571</b>	<b>254,466</b>	<b>325,067</b>	<b>435,872</b>