

Annual Report 2020-2021



www.sharphamtrust.org


THE
Sharpham
TRUST

Chairman's Introduction



Hello and welcome to the Annual Report.

What a year it has been. We closed – together with most of the country – at the end of March 2020. The House is at its best when it is full, and to go from buzzing beginners' retreats to a few staff doing a deep clean, and then only the Caretaker in the house (as many went on furlough), was unnerving to say the least. But what we do at the Trust is connect people to themselves and to natural world, and in doing so help people to feel more alive,

and resilient... so we applied some of this thinking, and those resources, to the situation we all found ourselves in.

It made a huge difference to us that so many retreatants who had hoped to come during the year kept credits with us to use in the future – thank you.

The fantastic Trust team here launched online retreats and meditations, kept going with the Rewilding project and the gardening needs, offered mindfulness resources to those who benefited from them, got us featured in national publications, and created a wonderful cookbook (led by our much admired chef, Janet). To all the staff, who made huge efforts and worked through arduous conditions – thank you.

We managed to open in Summer 2020 and put on safe, socially-distanced retreats, encouraging one participant to tell us:

"Such a stunning place to come for a Mindfulness retreat and digital detox. Amazing vegetarian food, kind and friendly staff, and all felt very safe, even during this Covid period."

We had to close down again in November and couldn't put on Christmas or New Year retreats, but when we were able to open in January, you joined us enthusiastically and many of our retreats sold out quickly – thank you.

It was a year full of changes, and after 10 years as Chair I stepped down in February. The new Chair, Daniel Stokes, has been a Trustee for many years and he shares a vision of The Trust which is welcoming to all, and dedicated to connecting people to the natural world. I look forward to working with him, and the team, for years to come.

Despite the obvious setbacks of this year, it was also an exciting time too. I hope you enjoy this Annual Report, and thank you for your kindness and generosity over the years. The Trust would not be what it is without all of those who have engaged with it. May its strength also be your strength.

William Lana, Chair of The Sharpham Trust, 2011-21

Our Vision, Purpose and Principles

Our Vision

To create a more mindful, compassionate and environmentally-sustainable world.

Our Mission

To connect people with nature and foster mindfulness and well-being.

The Trust works to a strong set of guiding principles and these act as a moral and creative compass in the planning of activities and projects.

Our Principles

The Trust's activities are guided by

- an understanding of the interconnectedness of all life
- a deep respect for the natural world
- a belief in learning through experience, creative engagement and enquiry
- an acknowledgement of the value of stillness and awareness

The Trust aspires to be a living demonstration of these principles in all its activities.

Objectives

1. To develop a range of innovative educational activities based on a sense of Sharpham as a special place
2. To demonstrate sustainable approaches to managing the land and buildings
3. To promote greater access to the Sharpham Estate
4. To operate a balanced budget with a secure income base

Director's Report



The 12 months leading up to March 2021 were very difficult for The Trust and for society as a whole as we battled to cope with the impacts of the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic the Trust had managed to put itself on a sound footing financially and feedback from our users was overwhelmingly positive. This made it all the more frustrating to have to close our programme and be unable to help people at such a difficult time. Trustees quickly decided that it was vital to look after our staff - many of whom were furloughed. We are delighted to say that we have avoided making any redundancies.

We have to thank the Government and funders like the National Lottery Heritage Fund for providing additional Covid-related emergency grants which have enabled us to weather the storm and avoid a large financial loss. We were able to open Sharpham House for a few weeks over the summer of 2020 and huge thanks go to our staff for enabling this to happen in a safe way. Due to the pandemic we are yet to return to any shared bedrooms in Sharpham House which has reduced our capacity and therefore impacted our finances. At the moment there is too much uncertainty to know when we can return to our previous group sizes.

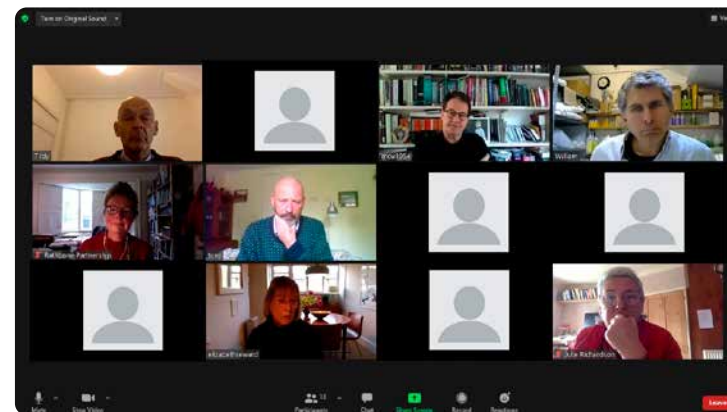
Having paused our project to re-develop the Coach House behind Sharpham House we started building works in June this year and hope to complete in February 2022.

The Coach House will go some way to restore some of our lost capacity due to Covid but we hope to be able to return to normality at some point. Similarly we expect our financial position to improve during 2021 and we know demand for our programme of courses and retreats is very strong. We have two significant projects: Mindful in Nature and Wild For People, both funded by the National Lottery. After reduced activity during 2020, I am pleased to say these projects are back up and running and benefiting many people.

Trustees are well aware of the risks to The Trust from the on-going pandemic but thanks to the hard work of recent years, the organisation is in a strong position to cope with any further difficulties that arise.

Lastly, huge thanks to William Lana who stepped down after ten years as Chair of the Trust. His support has been invaluable.

Julian Carnell, Trust Director



Our Trustees in 2020 (left to right from top): Daniel Stokes, Martin Wright, William Lana, Charlotte Rathbone, Tony Kuhl, Elizabeth Seward, Julie Richardson



Mindfulness Retreats & Courses

Mindfulness supports The Trust's charitable activities, our approach to caring for the land and each other.

- The Sharpham Trust was founded in 1982 by Maurice & Ruth Ash, daughter of the Elmhursts of Dartington.
- The Trust is a **leading centre nationally** for mindfulness offering a rich programme of retreats and courses with different doorways into mindful awareness – from retreats for beginners to those for experienced meditators.
- We offer **secular** mindfulness retreats & courses as well as retreats in the **Buddhist** tradition.
- During 2020, we created online offers to support locked-down and isolated people and Devon NHS staff
- Last year 3,024 people benefited from Sharpham mindfulness retreats and courses.

Retreats in 5 places

Sharpham House Retreats



Our retreats in a Georgian house on a bend in the River Dart allow people to stay full-board amid history, art and stunning nature. During this financial year, Sharpham House closed, but was able to reopen in the summer, after Sharpham staff worked hard to create Covid-safe retreats.

The Barn Retreat Centre



People stay in community at The Barn, living and meditating together and working on the land each day – however, The Barn remained closed throughout 2020.

Woodland Retreats



These take place under canvas in woodland behind Sharpham House, affording people a closer connection to nature. During this year, we were able to offer Covid-secure, outdoor retreats at a time when other venues were closed.

Solitary retreat spaces



The Kuti and The Cabin are hermitages in the grounds of The Barn where people can experience a solitary retreat. Food is supplied by The Barn.

Online Retreats



We created 1-day and 3-day online retreats, run by The Barn team, to help support locked-down people. Participants were invited to follow a carefully-planned schedule that included guided meditations, movement practices, off-screen times and nature practices.

Mindfulness courses

Because of the pandemic, we had to cancel our in-person 8-week course but we developed an online version and ran this twice during this financial year, delivering to 35 participants.

We also developed a 7-week version of the course for Devon NHS staff.

FREE MEDITATIONS:
www.sharphamtrust.org/resources

Mindful-in-Nature

Mindful-in-Nature is a 4-year programme supported by the National Lottery Community Fund. The project is specifically designed to support mental health recovery, resilience and well-being for people aged 18+ living locally, combining mindfulness and nature connection.

The project has been co-designed with Devon Recovery Learning Community, with input from people with lived experience of mental health challenges. It is supported by a grant from the National Lottery Community Fund. This was the third year of a 4-year programme.



"Simply the most profound learning and self-development work I've ever done"
a project participant

This year all of our 1-day Mindful-in-Nature days were cancelled. We were able to deliver one 9-week course during the months of September – December 2020. Due to Covid restrictions, our group size was smaller than usual with only 6 people attending. We could have still met in groups of 15 as under government guidelines we fell into the category of a support group. We chose to have smaller groups to ensure safety amongst participants.

Due to the pandemic, we decided to take our Mindful-in-Nature sessions online. We created 2 groups, one for those due to start the course where they had a chance to meet with the leaders, other members of the group and experience Mindful-in-Nature activities. This helped participants stay connected with Sharpham and the course as some had been waiting 6 months to attend (due to courses being cancelled). This online version was delivered twice with **12** people attending.

"The Mindful-in-Nature course has given me a whole new set of tools to help manage my anxiety"
a project participant

We created a second group called Mindful-in-Nature re-connection. This was a group for past participants of the course to gather together online for 3 hour sessions with our leaders. We offered 6 of these sessions and engaged a total of **75** past participants of the course. We asked participants for feedback on these sessions which was overwhelmingly positive and there was a hunger for more sessions like this beyond Covid arrangements.

We have received very positive feedback from participants emphasising the importance of the project in such difficult times. The course has provided participants with a sense of belonging and community in a time of isolation and fragmentation.

"I have felt held and valued throughout and I am eternally grateful for being given this wonderful opportunity"
a project participant

There are 2 ways to participate in Mindful-in-Nature:

- a **1-day** introduction day, to give people a taste of the programme.
- a **9-week** programme of sessions.

CONTACT:
www.sharphamtrust.org/Mindful-in-Nature
or email the Project Co-ordinator on volunteer@sharphamtrust.org

Sharpham House cookbook Crowdfunder

We created and published the Sharpham House Cookbook – and raised £21k in the process!

Thanks to tremendous support from donors and book-buyers, we were able to raise much-needed funds for The Sharpham Trust, in a year that saw us lose 60% of our income.

Retreatants had been asking for a cookbook from our cook Janet for years, so there was enormous demand for her delicious vegetarian and vegan recipes. Following the campaign, the books went on sale in Sharpham House, The Barn and online.

Buy Sharpham House Cookbooks, together with our other publications Sharpham: A History and The Barn Cookbook, from our website here:
www.sharphamtrust.org/books

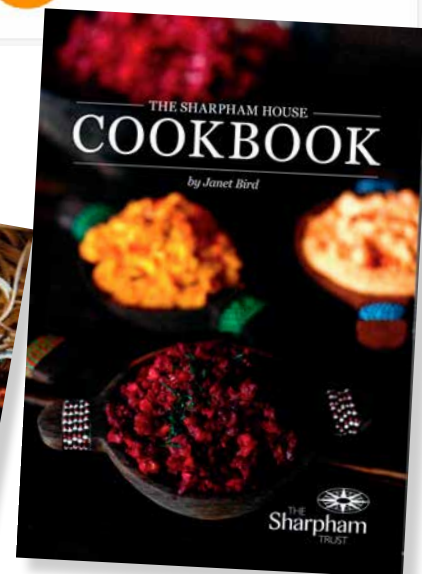


COVID APPEAL: Sharpham Cookbook

Overview

Total raised
£21,308

Trending towards
£21,308



Help us to help people and nature

You can help us to build a more mindful and sustainable world, whilst caring for the beautiful Sharpham Estate. **♥ Donate**

The generosity of our friends, visitors and donors helps us in our mission to connect people to nature and foster mindfulness and well-being – from enabling us to offer places to people on low income to supporting our efforts to rewild areas of the Estate.

Anything you can give will make a difference - and will be gratefully received.

HOW TO GIVE

- Choose whether to give a monthly gift, a donation to our General Fund or a Bursary Donation (enabling those on lower incomes to come on retreat with us)
- Donate quickly and securely online here: www.sharphamtrust.org/donate

Our gardens and food

This was a year of change, uncertainty and quietness in the gardens.

As the first lockdown began we had 2000 seedlings ready to go into the ground and it felt even more important than ever to continue growing food.

Although we were closed to retreatants we managed to connect with our local community and sell our spring and early summer salad, kale, chard and leeks to local box schemes and other customers. By the time we reopened in July the garden was full of delicious vegetables and fruits and we had another productive season supplying the kitchens. The gardens were quieter than usual which allowed more space for letting in the wild edges, increased visitor numbers of local deer, as well as more time for planning new projects for 2021!

During this year:

- we grew record numbers of cucumbers (157kg), 4.5kg chillies, 88kg tomatoes, 133kg beetroot
- we had no volunteers in the garden apart from a few staff and local support
- we grew over 1000 lettuce plants, over 50 different salad leaf varieties, 10 cucumber varieties, over 20 varieties of heritage tomatoes
- we sold our produce to 8 external customers from April until we reopened in July
- Riverford harvested and bought tonnes of wild garlic from the Great Woods



- recorded income of £8000 and 1.9 tonnes for the Walled Garden produce
- completed planning for a new polytunnel and new Herb Tea Garden for implementation in summer 2021.
- said goodbye to our lovely Garden Assistant Amy Cairns, who is now Assistant Horticulture teacher at Schumacher College

Events & Volunteering

Volunteers

Because of the pandemic, The Sharpham Trust was unable to offer its usual volunteer opportunities, although volunteer co-ordinators remained at The Barn Retreat Centre, contributing 2,980 hours to the Trust this year.

Barn co-ordinator volunteers
2,980 hours

LEARN MORE:
www.sharphamtrust.org/volunteer

25 bursaries worth
£5,070 given to people
of low income, enabling
them to come on retreat
at Sharpham



VIDEO

325
hours of Sharpham
video watched 2020-21



SEE MORE:
www.sharphamtrust.org/video

SOUNDCLOUD DOWNLOADS

13,500
plays of our meditations
in 2020-21



FREE MEDITATIONS:
www.sharphamtrust.org/resources

RETREATS

29 retreats attended by

799 participants



19 of our own
retreats in Sharpham
House with **474**
participants



10 woodland retreats
& **152** people



173

people stayed on
solitary retreat



93,528
website visitors



DONATIONS

£11,059
given



£21,308 raised
via Crowdfunder.co.uk



Wild for People

Our rewilding project went into its second year and was already producing results.

Data gathered by nature conservation trainers Ambios Ltd – partners with The Sharpham Trust in this project – found that there were increased insects and small mammals on the 50 acres being rewilding.

This meant that birds feeding on these – from Stonechats to Kestrels – were on the up too.

Public events planned to help people engage with the project had to be scrapped due to Covid during this year.

The project to make space for nature, rewild parts of the historic Sharpham landscape and help more people to engage with nature here has been funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

LEARN MORE:
www.sharphamtrust.org/wild-for-people

Sharpham Heritage

We were planning our third Heritage Day for November 2020, which was to celebrate 250 years of the completion of the Sharpham Palladian villa, commissioned by Captain Philemon Pownoll & designed by leading London architect Sir Robert Taylor.

But this was not to be. When the Covid-19 pandemic arrived, Sharpham closed, and most staff were furloughed and the Archive had to remain closed. However, the post still came, and it brought a book called The Metal in Britain's Coins, with a whole chapter on the captured Spanish treasure ship Hermione and Captain Pownoll's resulting acquisition of Sharpham with his prize money, enabling his new villa.



Sharpham Wine & Cheese

The Sharpham Partnership's vineyard and cheese dairy have been producing wines and unpasteurised cheeses for over 30 years to local and national acclaim, winning medals annually.

LEARN MORE & BUY:
www.sharpham.com

Events

We were unable to hold many events at Sharpham during this year, due to Covid legislation.

However, we were able to put on a Bats and Stargazing event, where the full moon and Jupiter above Sharpham's Great Run astounded participants. While we were unable to stage our Summer Open Day at all, we hosted an Apple Day with just staff and volunteers in order to process the fruit from our orchards, making 350 litres.

LEARN MORE:
www.sharphamtrust.org/events

Burials



Sharpham Meadow is a place for natural burials and ashes interments and is hugely appreciated by the local community whose loved ones are buried at this special place.

During this year, however, the Coronavirus pandemic forced changes to how funerals at Sharpham Meadow Natural Burial Ground could take place.

Numbers of mourners were greatly limited due to the Government's social-distancing rules. At one point, only 10 people were allowed at funerals here. And those people were unable to hug or participate in a wake.

Some people could attend via technology and iPads and tablets were used by funeral directors to enable locked-down people to participate in funerals here. Other people put off ashes interments until a time where more people could gather.

We also cancelled our All Souls' Day ceremony around the Ancestors' Fire in this year.

Despite the pandemic, we did not see a massive increase in burials during this reporting period. There were 106 burials, ashes interments and pre-paid plot purchases at Sharpham Meadow, compared to 81 in the previous year.

Sharpham Meadow is a haymeadow, with a flourishing and healthy ecosystem that includes small mammals, wildflowers, skylarks, hares and a variety of pollinating insects.



During this year, a Barn Owl was seen regularly hunting over the meadow, and we were able to capture it in close-up, using a camera trap supplied by Ambios Ltd – our partners in our rewilding project Wild for People.

LEARN MORE:
www.sharphamtrust.org/burials



Natural Burials

106 burials, ashes interments
and pre-paid plot purchases at
Sharpham Meadow.

What the reviewers say...

THE TIMES

"Our pick is a 5-night silent retreat, involving meditation, exercise & relaxation, with vegetarian dining" - listing us in 30 great breaks in Devon & Dorset

PSYCHOLOGIES

"A superior venue with an unrivalled range of breaks centred on mindfulness and nature" - we are highlighted as Retreat of the Year

The Guardian

"Start the new year with this inspiring choice of online health breaks" - we feature in in 15 of the UK's best virtual wellbeing retreats

The Daily Telegraph

"Where else can you practise walking meditation among roses and lilies in a formal garden, or meditate in a blue-painted music room where the marble fireplace is a sculptured work of art?" - a feature on our silent retreats in Sharpham House

leave us a review on



"I enjoyed the mixture of meditation and teaching sessions with personal time for reflection, rest or exploring. Sharpham have also put a lot of effort into running the retreats in line with Covid-19"

SEE MORE:
www.sharphamtrust.org/reviews

The Sharpham Estate

Upper Sharpham Barton

David & Helen Camp continued to farm Upper Sharpham Barton as they have done for the past 8 years. In May 2020 they expanded across the estate taking on part of Home farm. We began immediately to farm the land organically, grazing sheep and South Devon cattle.

This was a busy year getting to know the new land, harvesting hay and silage and applying ground limestone to the land to correct the Ph balance.

We entered into a new countryside stewardship agreement with Natural England which started in January 2021, which will see Spring Barley being grown, with stubble left over winter for birds to feed on, pasture land farmed extensively without artificial inputs along with a schedule of works to repair and protect hedges and boundaries.

In the summer we had breeding barn owls at both Upper Sharpham and the Stockern Plantation along with hares at Upper Sharpham Barton.

Lower Sharpham Barton Farm

Ambios are tenants of Lower Sharpham Barton Farm, comprising 80 acres of organic pasture and 50 acres of rewilding. We farm Organic cows, sheep and hens.

We manage the land to provide habitat for wildlife, creating a wild learning environment for nature conservation trainees who come from the UK and EU. We partner on the farm with United Response, a charity for adults with learning difficulties who gain work and well-being experience through involvement in animal care, horticulture, wood and metal work, forestry and nature conservation.

The Covid-19 challenges we faced were significant and profound. The impact of Brexit put further pressure on our activities as we found we were unable to host EU students in the way we had before.

But we were able to continue to support people – and we are stronger and more resilient for it.

Rewilding has taken hold of parts of the historic listed parkland at Sharpham and we are thrilled by the results, and the pandemic has allowed many people to reflect on their life choices and decide a different direction may be possible – we have been able to support some of these life changing choices through our traineeship programme.

This year, we could fully embrace our rewilding endeavours through the Sharpham Wild for People grant and our land management under Natural England-approved plans.

We employed a rewilding ranger to deliver volunteering opportunities to local people, we continued to offer our 12-week residential nature conservation training programme & offered 4 places to people in financial hardship via bursary funding.

Many of the vulnerable adults accessing United Response's day service were forced to shield. Following brief closure, grant aid supported their return by improving the site infrastructure and layout, and by the end of the period we were slowly increasing numbers of users desperate for access to the farm.

LEARN MORE:
www.ambios.net/our-farm

THE Sharpham TRUST



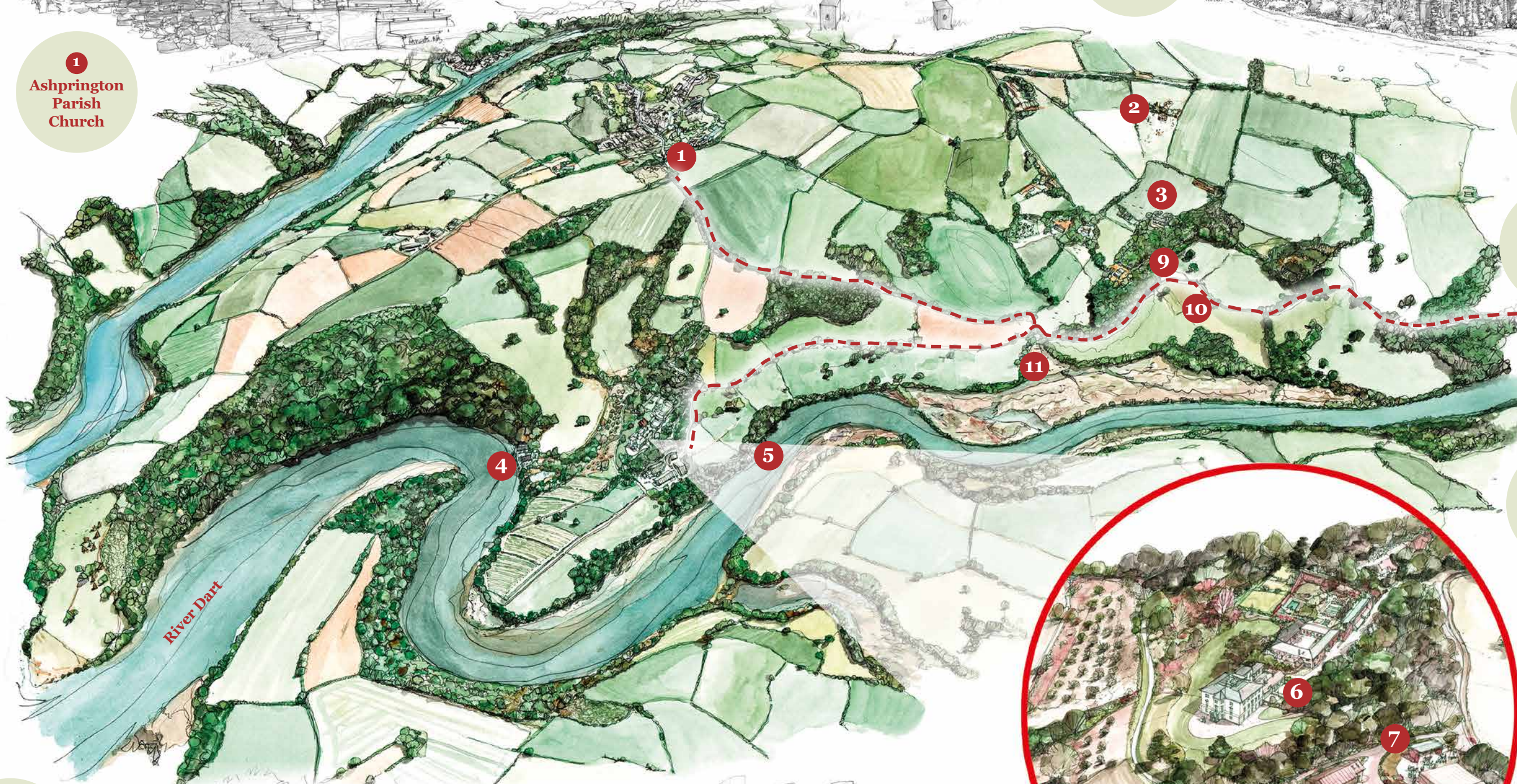
1
Ashprington
Parish
Church



2
Sharpham
Meadow
Natural Burial
Ground



3
The Barn
Retreat
Centre



9
Lower
Sharpham
Barton
Farm

10
Sit-spot:
Green
Oak Bench

The Carriage Drive
- cycling/walking
route from
Totnes to Sharpham

11
Sit-spot:
Reed
beds

6
Sharpham
House

7
Sharpham
Wine &
Cheese

8
Sharpham
Café

5
North
Quay

4
Bathing
House



Financial information

Donations and grants

Mindful-In-Nature programme, from the National Lottery Community Fund - £14,613

Wild For People project, from the National Lottery Heritage Fund - £27,733

Donations - £27,295

Headline Figures		
EOY period	March 2020	March 2021
Total income	1.378m	1.036m
Total expenditure	1.072m	0.957m
Total funds	6.808m	7.598m
Voluntary income (donations)	0.022m	0.027m
Investment income	0.116m	0.101m
Charity activity income	1.091m	0.503m
Investment management costs	0.026m	0.026m
Cost of charitable activities	1.013m	0.899m
Governance	0.022m	0.019m
Governance as % total expenditure	2.16%	2.17%

Trust Salaries

The Trust believes in equal pay and a living wage. It pays all staff more than the current governmental national minimum wage and more than the Living Wage as defined by The Living Wage Foundation.

Pay ratio

The ratio between the highest paid member of staff and the median or average pay for all staff at the Trust is 1.95.

The ratio between the highest paid and lowest paid is 2.75.



Ashprington, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 7UT
01803 732542 • bookings@sharphamtrust.org



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