



# Children's Forest at Leasowe Farm Final Report to WCC Green Shoots Fund August 2023



## Summary:

As of Spring 2023, Achieving Results in Communities (ARC) have finished planting approximately 2700 trees in a field at Leasowe Farm near Radford Semele.

This report outlines the steps taken to create the Children's Forest here in Warwickshire. The people engaged, trees planted and what is happening to ensure this newly planted forest continues to survive and thrive with the support of the community.

## Headline figures:

- **2700** trees in the Children's Forest at Leasowe Farm planted between December 2021 - March 2023
- Over **500** individuals engaged with the project. 330 of those were children and young people. This is made up of 3 schools, Warwickshire College, a Home Education Group, Lillington Youth Club, Leamington LAMP, Local faith groups - Ahmadiyya Muslim Women and Men (including refugee groups), local Friendship group, ARC Wellbeing in Nature group plus many local families and members of the local community e.g from Radford and Leamington and Canalside Community Farm.
- **17** different species of native trees and shrubs planted



## Governance:

The project is underpinned by the (informally titled) “Leasowe Land Regeneration Steering Group” which was formed in late 2020 made up of

- 5 representatives from ARC
- 2 members of the Ingall Family (land owners)
- 3 other passionate members of the community



It has been vital to the success of this project that there is a mix of representatives informing decision making along the way.

Currently the group is an informal Steering Group with the future intention of becoming formalised/constituted.

The current thinking is that this will be formed into a **Friends of Leasowe Farm** to help support the overall land regeneration vision

## Background:

In July 2021 ARC applied and were successful in receiving funding from Warwickshire County Council's Green Shoots Climate Resilience Fund to plant a Children's Forest at Leasowe Farm in Radford Semele.



The project had an initial 2 year time frame, with a number of aims and intentions:

- Nurturing a deeper connection to nature by engaging children, families and the wider community in planting, tending and caring for trees.
- Encourage an understanding of the importance of trees in mitigation against climate change
- Ensure 2600 trees are growing in a 4 acre field in the Children's Forest at Leasowe Farm

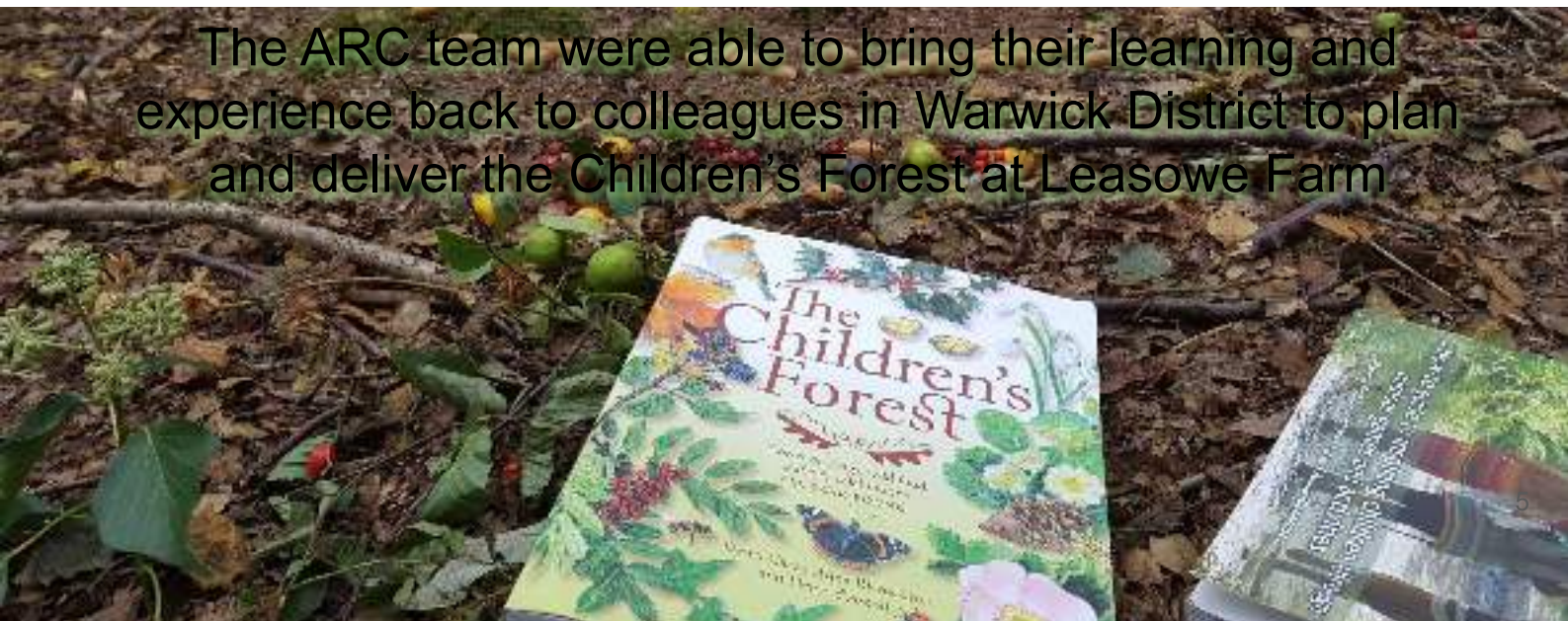




**Achieving Results in Communities (ARC)** are a local community organisation that has been working for over 10 years to enhance access to, and management of, the natural environment to benefit the physical and mental health and wellbeing of local people.

In October 2021, 3 ARC staff members attended a 2 day training weekend led by the national Children's Forest Project. The Children's Forest is a movement to inspire and enable children to plant healthy forests originally created in Sussex and now spreading green tendrils across the UK.

The ARC team were able to bring their learning and experience back to colleagues in Warwick District to plan and deliver the Children's Forest at Leasowe Farm





## The Land at Leasowe Farm:

A representative from **The Woodland Trust** visited the planting field recommended the mix of trees most suitable for the land and surrounding environment.

From that initial visit, the Steering Group selected a mix of 17 different trees and shrub varieties.

Along with planting in the field, a hedgerow has been included to separate the field from the next and to extend the existing hedge from surrounding fields.



In Year 1 (2021- 22) 1800 trees were received from the Woodland Trust.

The field was planned and marked out with bamboo canes/ tree stakes

In Year 2 (2022 - 23) a further 800 trees were received from the Woodland Trust. An additional approx. 100 rees were also donated from local sources



**Tree mix for Y1:** Hazel - 200, Hawthorn - 300, Spindle -100, Dogwood -100, Crab Apple - 75, Rowan - 50, Field Maple - 75, Blackthorn - 125, Holly - 75 Alder - 50, Silver Birch - 100, Hornbeam -100, Sweet Chestnut - 50, Scots Pine - 100, Wild Cherry - 100, Bird Cherry - 50, Oak - 150.

They were 'heeled' into trenches for winter to be kept safely between planting sessions



### **Tree mix for Y2:**

Alder 50; Rowan 50; Scots Pine 100; Common Oak 150; Crab Apple 75; Silver Birch 100; Field Maple 75 Wild Cherry 100; Hornbeam 100

Again, they were 'heeled' into trenches for winter to be kept safely between planting sessions.





## The Schools:

In both tree planting seasons we worked with Year 5 children from 3 local schools.

The Year 9 - 10 age group was seen as the best to engage with both the Children's Forest methodology and to have awareness of climate change.



These 3 primary schools were chosen because of their proximity to the farm (Radford Children were able to walk to the farm) and because Clapham Terrace and Shrubland St are both small urban schools in Leamington with very little natural outdoor space.



**The Children's Forest methodology** is a four step journey that supports a meaningful connection to tree planting and the existing ecosystem; that activates future generational thinking and supports children to take hopeful action in the face of climate change.



**Step 1 Experiencing:** By engaging in embodied experience in woodlands through Forest School, we support Children to develop genuine care and personal relationship with the natural world.





## Step 2 Imagining:

Their time in the woods enables the children to look out over the land and imagine future forests.

Through the creative arts, they engage with the vision of woodland that they will plant. The children sang songs, painted rocks and trees. They collaborated in a class poem and took part in a storytelling activity.





### Step 3 Planting:

As they planted the trees, the children wrote their wishes for the future generations on leaves which they placed alongside their trees... *'that these woods will never be cut down'* *'that all animals will have a home,'* *'that we will all have clean water to drink'.*



The Children also learnt about the characteristics, uses and 'tree lore' of the species they were planting - such as *'Hazel - tree of knowledge'* or *'Oak - tree of strength'*



## Step 4: Tending:

A very important step in the Children's Forest and for the trees - the children returned to the woodland to care for the trees by mulching, watering and weeding. In this way they are tending to their connection to the land as well as the trees themselves.



The trees were planted around a central Children's Fire. There the children will continue to gather in years to come.





## **Some words from the children's experience....**

*We got to find out that nature is amazing and you don't need electronics to have fun.*

*I'm grateful that I've learned how incredible nature is*

*I found today was calm and peaceful*

*I am grateful to be here in the fresh, clean air*

*I like that we were not rushed here and could take time to enjoy things*

*I am grateful that we get to plant trees today to help the environment*

*I hope the trees grow big and strong and last forever*





*I am still buzzing about the whole experience, I can't thank you enough for including our school in such an amazing project.*

*Year 5 have had the best few days and the parents are so grateful too. They have completed a fact file about their animals and written thank you cards.*

**Julia Finn, Forest School  
Teacher, Radford Semele  
Primary School**



*“Tom and I have lived on this land for around 20 years and we hope to be here for a lot longer. Together with our children, we will watch and protect these trees as they grow.*

*We are so pleased to see all your lovely smiling faces enjoying the Children's Forest today”.*

**Caz Ingall, Guardian  
Landowner**



## The Wider Community:

Over the past 2 years ARC and the Steering Group held many community planting days with families from the local area attending to learn about the Children's Forest and to plant the rest of the trees.



In the first year, other groups included students from Warwickshire College, a Home Education Groups, Friendship groups, Ahmadiyya Muslim Association members, Clean Air for Warwickshire Members, Leamington and Warwick Good Gym and over 350 local individuals and families.

In the second year, other groups Lillington Youth Club, LAMP (an alternative education provider) ARC's Wellbeing in Nature groups, representatives from WARwick District Council and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust





The trees have all been planted within the field and in a hedge creating a division between the Children's Forest and the adjacent Canalside Community Farm.





A regular e-newsletter with updates has been sent out by ARC and throughout the year groups and individuals have returned for 'tending' visits to mulch water and weed around the trees on organised 'Community Tending Days'.







The summer of 2022 was extremely hot, dry with very little rain and temperatures regularly over 30 degrees.

Thankfully most of the trees survived - regular watering by volunteers and the mulch around the base of each tree appears to have helped keep moisture in.

Most varieties of trees have survived and grown well - with the exception of Alder. Out of the 50 that were planted, less than half survived.

Scots Pine also seems to have struggled with a number also dying.

These 2 varieties were replaced in Y2 planting and we will continue to monitor them (along with all the trees) to see how they grow this season





Celebration Event - On Saturday 8th July 2023 a celebration event was held in the Children's Forest where members of the community and the team were able to share in the success of the initial 2 years of the Children's Forest at Leasowe Farm. We gathered around the Children's fire, sang songs, shared stories and had an afternoon tea picnic amongst the trees!





## Our Team:

ARC are extremely fortunate to have a fantastic team of staff and volunteers to deliver this project



Project Management: **Katherine Pasteur and Kristie Naimo**



Wonderful volunteers: **Kerry, Di, Margaret, Mark, Lucie, Verity**



Session

Facilitators: **Matt Cox, Agnes Ashbell and Kate Haines**



The landowners: **The Ings, Jane, John, Tom and C**



## Summary and next steps:

As of April 2023, over 2700 trees have been planted in the Children's Forest at Leasowe Farm. We have lost some - a very small percentage of Scots pine and silver birch seem to have struggled to establish.

Ongoing after-care or 'tending' visits continue throughout the summer of 2023 with some school groups and other volunteers. This has been made possible via the remainder of the funding from the Green Shoots project and some additional funding from the Nineveh Charitable Trust.

Following the success of this initial Children's Forest project at Leasowe Farm, ARC are continuing to liaise with local landowners and Warwick District Council to look at other possible locations for Children's Forest projects across the District

The Landowners at Leasowe Farm are also exploring further tree planting and habitat creation on their land and would be keen to involve ARC and the Children's Forest methodology in this process.

ARC are continually seeking funding for ongoing care of the existing trees - particularly in the first five years of growth - and to fund future Children's Forest projects.





# Would you like to get involved in the Children's Forest project?

Do you have any land that needs planting?

Would you like to volunteer to 'tend' the trees in the coming months

For further details about please contact  
Achieving Results in Communities (ARC):

[Childrensforest@arccic.co.uk](mailto:Childrensforest@arccic.co.uk)

OR visit our website:

<https://arccic.co.uk/children-and-youth/childrens-forest/>

