This has been a year of development and change for Farms for City Children, including some significant changes of personnel at Head Office and on the farms.

After ten years with the charity and seven years as Chief Executive, Helen Chaloner left us in May to pursue freelance consultancy on the administration of charities. She had worked tirelessly and systematically to bring the Charity forward in its administration, moving our headquarters from Okehampton to Exeter, and had pursued all aspects of the Charity’s aims with great commitment. We are most grateful to her.

From among more than seventy applicants, Dr Tessa Stone, her successor, took up her post in September 2014. She is a very experienced Chief Executive and is eager to make a positive impact on all the issues which challenge us. Our Deputy Chief Executive, Dean Holland, did a splendid and steadying job taking charge of things in the five months of interregnum.

Ana Green, our school manager at Lower Treginnis, left us this year. She had done so much in her two years with us to develop both the environment and the activities on the farm, including a refurbishment of the kitchen and the promotion of children’s cooking. Her enthusiastic successor, Dan Jones, is an old friend of Lower Treginnis, having made many visits as a teacher with his pupils from Parkland Primary in Swansea. He has exciting plans for a new classroom and storytelling space, as well as a myriad of ideas for extending and developing the livestock and increasing the productivity of the vegetable garden. The goat milking sessions have already proved a favourite with visiting groups.

At Nethercott Lee Blake is the new Farm Manager, replacing Barry Searle who was his long-serving and committed predecessor. Lee brings farming and teaching experience with him from his native Northeast. He plans to develop our pig husbandry and expand and reorganise the poultry and gardening sessions. We also hope to realize long-held plans for a food production area so that the children can make apple juice, cheese, butter and chutneys and prepare vegetables so that the waste can go to pigs and poultry.

At Wick Court the farm business and land management are in the safe hands of Senior Farm Manager, John Goodman. Working closely with the vets he has done a
huge amount to improve health and safety procedures and livestock management. We have been accepted into the Higher Level Stewardship scheme. We are now self-sufficient in delicious pork, lamb and beef.

Brian Dimmock and his team of volunteers have further improved and developed the splendid garden area and doubled the number of sessions the children spend there. The juicing activity has been upgraded too, so that in the autumn term all the children harvest, process and drink apple and pear juice. The apiary has been extended and all groups visiting between May and October have enjoyed bee-keeping sessions fully protected by new bee suits. Birdwatching, led by two volunteers, has gone from strength to strength. A culmination of all this is the introduction of a new Woodland Afternoon incorporating the elements of the Forest School Philosophy with environmental investigations and art and craft activities, finishing with storytelling round the campfire.

So many new activities have been introduced but all the farms stay true to the ethos of providing real, purposeful jobs in land management and food production while retaining the magic that comes with total immersion in rural life in an amazing setting.

From both the children’s and the teachers’ reactions to The FFCC experience it is clear that our work is more relevant than ever. The external evaluation we commissioned this year from Bill Graham, a distinguished pioneer of farming and countryside education, confirmed the long-lasting impact and benefit of what we offer.

Our work would be impossible without the generosity of our many sponsors and supporters, and this year as every year we have benefited from exceptional generosity. Staff from the Savoy Hotel in London did a sponsored bike ride, cycling from the Savoy to Nethercott Farm and back. They also managed to fit in a day’s volunteering and were joined by teams from Jackson Stops and Staff in Exeter and Waitrose in Okehampton. The Grosvenor group held a ‘Grosvenor’s Got Talent’ night and their staff were joined by our Vice-President, Joanna Lumley, members of the cast of War Horse including Joey the Horse, with FFCC represented by the Chair of Trustees, Chief Executive and Fundraiser.

Sidmouth Donkey Sanctuary donated two donkeys, Applejack and Ned, to Nethercott and Claudia Risdale donated Eric, a retired show pony. Nethercott was also delighted to receive an incubator, donated in memory of one of our most loyal supporters, Peter Bell. The NFU Mutual Charitable Trust funded the renovation of Treginnis’ pig sties and the Friends of Treginnis again provide valuable on-going financial support.

Among individual supporters a special mention for Ros Allwood for walking across the twelve bridges of London and raising a fantastic £995 for Farms for City Children, and to Amanda and Connie at Head Office who threw caution to the wind and took part in a world record tandem skydive.

We are enormously grateful to all our supporters.

We look back with pride and forward to the future of FFCC with great confidence and enthusiasm.

Elizabeth Owens Chairman

10th Dec 2014