



# WORD FOREST

**Annual Report 2023-2024**

## About the Charity

This is the Annual Report and Accounts for The Word Forest Organisation, a charity registered in the United Kingdom by the Charity Commission  
Charity No: 1172497

## Registered Address and Contact Details

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## Trustees

Mr Simon West FRSA (Chair of Trustees)  
Ms Rikey Austin  
Ms Eva Dixon  
Mr Philip Gamble  
Ms Camille Oster  
Mrs Izzy Robertson

## Chief Executive Officer

Mrs Tracey West FRSA

## Managing Director

Mr Simon West FRSA

## Patrons

Clare Nasir and Zena Edwards

## Special Advisors

Bill McGuire and Jo Lawrance

## Our Constitutional Structure

Word Forest was incorporated as a CIO on 7th April 2017.

Our constitution follows the model for a Charitable Incorporated Organisation as set out by the Charity Commission for England and Wales and was adopted on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2017 and revised on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021.

## Charitable Objects and Public Benefit

To promote sustainable development\* for the benefit of the public in countries to be determined by the Trustees by:

- (a) the preservation, conservation and the protection of the environment and the prudent use of resources;
- (b) the relief of poverty and the improvement of the conditions of life in socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

\*Sustainable development means “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

The Trustees have had regard to the guidance published by the Charity Commission under section 4 of the Charities Act 2011 in planning our activities.

The positive social impact of our work is considered before we direct our tree-planting communities, and outcomes are directly monitored. This enables the Trustees to be confident that the charity has, through its range of activities, achieved significant public benefit for the community in Kenya, and in countries as determined by the Trustees.

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## From the Board

### Tracey West: CEO and Fundraiser

In 1860, in the book 'The Mill on the Floss' George Eliot penned the enigmatic line: "Do not judge a book by its cover; see it through, and read it carefully before forming an opinion." That's precisely what I'd like you to do with this year's Report and Accounts.



It's an unavoidable fact: we haven't generated as much income as we did last year. However, according to a recent report by Charity Pulse, 45% of UK charities saw parity or a drop in their income too. Increases in the costs of living/trading for individuals/businesses have left deep scars on many a financial landscape. Also, our core admin team is small and I made it even smaller while I fitted in 3 operations to resolve profoundly impaired vision. That said, whilst my visual acuity was negatively affected, my creative brain was as active as ever! I have now made a solid recovery and I'm back in the EV with my pedal to the metal.

Interestingly, my short-term disability and great frustration from being unable to read, bore a silver lining. I instigated the overhaul of our website and great improvements were made to accessibility (who knew black and yellow worked so well together?) We now have a small group of fabulous volunteers who record our twice-weekly articles and describe the images. They're currently working their way through our archives and in due course, we aim to have a 'Click to Listen' button on every page.

We remain steadfast and a-buzz as we forge pioneering new plans for ambitious fundraising initiatives. The one we launched in December 2023, the Word Forest Bring & Share Vegan Lunch, is doing very well indeed, moreover, the future for scaling it up looks bright. Take a look at [WordForest.org/lunch](http://WordForest.org/lunch) for our Step by Step Guide to hosting one and helping us combat the climate emergency one dinner plate at a time.

Another prospect-filled boost to our income stream - our Carbon Offset Programme - is just about to reveal itself in an official capacity. The development of it has been spearheaded by Simon West and it has taken well over a year to bring to fruition. The complex process of gaining accreditation to be an offset provider has been eased by a welcome armful of blood from our Corporate Partners, Oaklin Consulting, to whom we remain extremely grateful.

Our entry into this market is on target to begin in the second quarter and suffice to say it has been a supremely arduous project to nail to the wall. The application process with Gold Standard has been painstaking and highly detailed. Some preliminary work was completed by Sue Jueno and Jo Smith some time back to assess its viability and since then, Simon has led the international development and the application process itself. I cannot thank him enough for his tenacity and patience.

Why are we entering this field at all, some of you may be asking? Put simply, whilst we realise this is a topic has been spotlighted in the press and is shrouded by varying degrees of contention because of the opportunities for businesses to do a bit of 'greenwashing', if we stand any chance of expanding our income significantly in order to stop global heating from getting significantly worse, it'll only happen in a compelling way if we are accredited carbon offset providers.

If you're a long term fan of Word Forest, you'll know we set up our Education Learning Platform some time back to encourage people to be better all round environmentalists. One of the motivators behind it was to try and stamp out greenwashing by offering solutions to educate employees. May I restate there is an urgent need for the business world to refocus its lens on what it actually means to put profit before planet. There is

no business to be done on a broken planet. To that end, our Ethics Trustee, Rikey Austin, has always been on hand to advise us on such matters and if you need any additional assistance on that front, she will be delighted to help.

If you know Word Forest of old, you'll know that our standards are high, transparency is something we pride ourselves on and we have always brought so much more to the table than mere tree planting. I hope you devour this year's Report and Accounts and agree with me that we are so much more than our bottom line. We will continue to strengthen the tree planting communities we're so lucky to work with by being a trustworthy conduit between your money and their mission to mitigate global warming for us all.

## **Simon West: Managing Director and Chair of Trustees**

In 2023, all charities encountered a multitude of challenges that tested their resilience and adaptability. Inflationary pressures and supply chain disruptions posed challenges to businesses, consumers and charities alike. The rising costs of goods and services, coupled with stagnant wage growth, strained household budgets and contributed to inflationary concerns. This led to reduced donor contributions and increased demand for charitable services, creating a delicate balancing act for all organisations already operating on tight budgets.



Political instability and social unrest in various parts of the world further complicated matters, and the evolving landscape of technology also presented challenges, as charities struggled to keep pace with digital advancements while ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for all beneficiaries.

As you will see in the CEO's report, we are not alone in finding it difficult to maintain our income, with more and more charities seeking smaller and smaller pots of funding.

We have come to the end of this year with a solid resolve to keep going and to do better. Our grant applications are better and more compelling than ever before. Our strategy to finally become certified Carbon Offset providers is close to being complete. Our relationships with corporate partners remain strong and we continue to seek new and better ways to attract further support from businesses. We will not "go gentle into that good night", but will diligently work to make our eighth year, our best ever.

The work completed in Kenya and the number of trees, beneficiaries and educational programmes have all increased. We have almost completed the installation of piped water to the Permaculture Teaching Centre in Garashi and the 87.4% of non-ring fenced income which went to our beneficiaries is something that should make us all proud.

My heartfelt thanks go to all of our donors, corporate partners, volunteers and employees. Together, we have continued to bring hope to a group of people 5,000 miles away, that they can make a better future for themselves and help reduce planetary climate chaos.

## Rikey Austin: Ethics Trustee

My name is Rikey Austin and I've been Word Forest's Ethics Trustee since the charity started back in 2017. I also self-funded a trip to Kenya to accompany Tracey and Simon for a week to help them perform monitoring and evaluation duties in 2019.



For me, that week was life changing. Meeting the Mothers of the Forest was such a privilege and with assistance from another volunteer, Yvonne, I ran a few workshops on jewellery beadwork and crafting, designed to help them create an income stream.

When you're working with the incredible people who live on the frontline of the climate crisis, it is truly humbling. Experiencing, even for a short while, the life and death effects of a changing planet on people you have come to care for deeply, is sobering. There is a real risk of being swept away by the urgency and gravity of their situation and of developing tunnel vision and either focusing on it, or turning away.

I think some have chosen to turn a blind eye to what's going on because the reality is just too horrific to consider. Could the problems Kenyans are facing right now - drought, extreme precipitation, floods, displacement - spread around the world and pay them a visit? In short, yes they could, they are.

Our team at Word Forest recognise this and we sympathise. It is almost unthinkable and the window of opportunity for reforesting Kenya is slowly closing, so it's driving our activities and our passion to be the best environmental charity we can be.

Together, we've created an organisation that has a strong ethical foundation and it touches on every aspect of our work, from fundraising events to the drinks and refreshments we serve in the office and the paper we print on, if ever we have to.

Trees are the key to lessening the impact of our climate crisis but the planet which that key opens a door to, needs to be a world that is healthy, safe, equitable and peaceful.

With this in mind, I'm sure you'll take comfort knowing we constantly monitor the peripheral effects and consequences of our actions to ensure that our vision remains inclusive, supportive and driven by the needs of our beneficiaries. This is a journey that we are all on together for the greater good of our planet, its people, wildlife, biodiversity and more. Done right, it's a total #WinWin.

Here are some examples of our ethics outside of our tree planting and classroom building work. You can find more by taking a look at our Moral Compass on our website.

We support ongoing learning for our staff in the UK and our teams in Kenya. Empowering and educating the women who are the very heart of Word Forest, is paramount.

We only serve plant-based food and refreshments at events and in our office because this is a shared planet and it helps us leave the lightest footprint possible.

We use 100% recycled paper and print cautiously because what's the point of planting trees if we're going to be responsible for chopping them down again?

We have a fully accessible office because everyone has the right to be part of the change.

All of our fundraising merchandise comes from organisations with strong ethical and environmental policies for their staff and the products they make. Our fundraising apparel is gorgeous, 100% organic cotton and vegan friendly. When you support us by wearing it for Word Forest, you're supporting other ethical thinkers who share our values and want to create a better world.

Thank you for joining us and supporting us on this vital journey. Be assured that we are doing our level best, in every aspect of our work, to protect and heal the home we all share by supporting the phenomenal tree planting communities of Kenya.



## **Izzy Robertson: Literacy Trustee**

This year comes to a close with some wonderful progress made. It's been a delight to see how the Mothers of the Forest groups in Garashi and Rusinga Island have gone from strength to strength, embracing all opportunities offered for education and continuing to champion permaculture techniques and the planting of trees. The wider communities have also been involved in tree planting projects, and the Permaculture Teaching Centre at Garashi now hosts a tree nursery as well as courses and the Mothers' group meetings.



We've tried to keep our newsfeed updated with the projects happening in Kenya as well as a range of other informative articles, which we really hope that people have enjoyed and found useful.

As a trustee, I'd like to extend my thanks to all our supporters, volunteers, donors and corporate partners because we really, really could not do this without you. Our teams in Kenya and the UK are real forces of nature. And special thanks go to our phenomenal CEO and MD, Tracey and Simon West, two walking human miracles who continue to pull rabbits out of hats even in the most challenging of circumstances.

When the need we see around us is so great, it's easy to feel overwhelmed and that nothing we do will ever be enough to make a difference. I'd like to end this piece with a thought about bluebells. One on its own is beautiful – together, they completely transform the landscape. When you act in a positive way, it's important – it does matter. And if we keep acting together and supporting each other, we really can transform the world.

Asante sana – thank you.

# Financial Summary

## Income

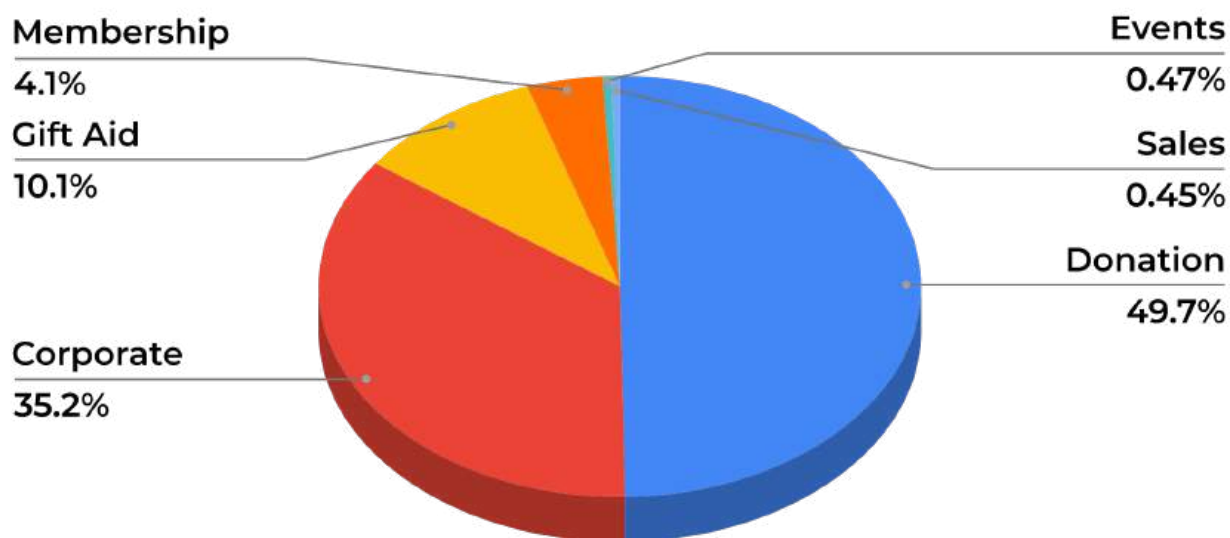
In 2023-2024 (year 7) our income was **£76,508**, a decrease of 24.8% over our 2022-2023 income of £101,738.00.

## Income by Category

Category	Amount	Percent	2022-2023	Change
Donation	£38,007.65	49.72%	£53,096.45	-28.4%
Corporate	£27,015.00	35.22%	£23,235.00	+16.3%
Gift Aid	£7,733.94	10.08%	£10,949.99	-29.4%
Grant	£0.00	0.00%	£9,948.60	-100.0%
Membership	£3,044.34	4.06%	£3,564.00	-14.6%
Events Income	£363.07	0.47%	£516.30	-29.7%
Sales	£344.00	0.45%	£427.66	-19.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£76,508.00</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>£101,738.00</b>	<b>-24.8%</b>

Our ring fenced income was **£8,000**, (all for salaries) and our non-ring fenced income was **£68,508**.

## Income



## Outgoings

Our total outgoings were **£82,555.66**. **£58,130.40** of this went directly to Kenya. This represents 75.7% of our total income, but **87.4%** of our non-ring fenced income.

For 2024 we have increased our rate of pay for people we employ in Kenya by 10%, to 242 Kenyan Shillings per hour, or **505,296 KES** per year full time equivalent, which is the same as a senior high school teacher or middle manager.

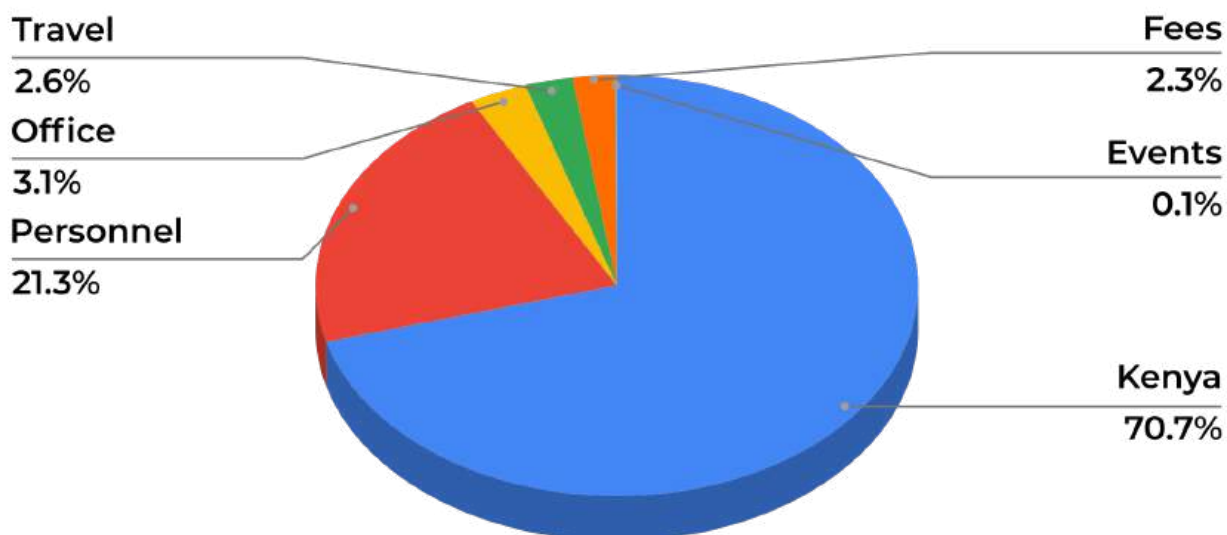
From January 2024 we increased our UK salary rate to £12.00 per hour in line with The Living Wage Foundation recommendation (see [livingwage.org.uk](http://livingwage.org.uk))

We ended the year with a balance of **£3,635.23** and an average monthly income of **£6,363.93**, compared to £8,478.17 the previous year - a decrease of 25%.

## Outgoings by Category

Category	Amount	Percent	2021-2022	Change
Kenya	£58,130.40	70.7%	£65,442.48	-11%
Personnel	£17,511.29	21.3%	£17,004.47	+3%
Office	£2,551.09	3.1%	£1,049.03	+143%
Travel	£2,106.82	2.6%	£11,702.55	-82%
Fees	£1,885.65	2.3%	£2,657.70	-29%
Events	£56.00	0.1%	£496.90	-89%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£82,241.25</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>£98,353.13</b>	<b>-16%</b>

## Outgoings

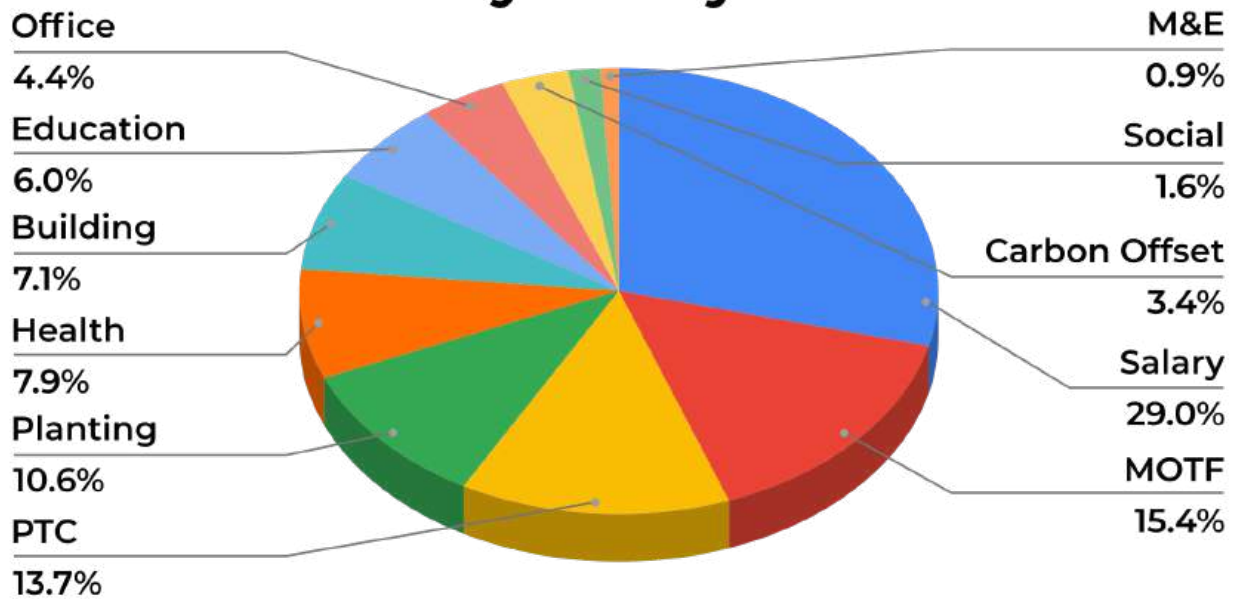


## Kenya projects by Category

For 2022-2023 we have analysed the money sent to projects by category to better understand what we are funding. Almost all of the funding categories have tree planting associated with them, so where we have paid for a building to be built, there will have been trees planted at a rate of at least one tree for every £2.50 sent over.

Category	Amount	Percent	GBP (Approx)
Salary	Ksh 2,998,343	29.0%	£16,936.97
MOTF	Ksh 1,599,139	15.4%	£8,839.70
PTC	Ksh 1,413,521	13.7%	£8,068.79
Planting	Ksh 1,093,351	10.6%	£6,345.77
Health & Wellbeing	Ksh 821,175	7.9%	£4,256.47
Building	Ksh 735,670	7.1%	£4,079.79
Education	Ksh 622,180	6.0%	£3,521.37
Office	Ksh 453,010	4.4%	£2,574.53
Carbon Offset	Ksh 353,040	3.4%	£2,000.82
Social	Ksh 165,920	1.6%	£958.76
M&E	Ksh 97,000	0.9%	£547.43
<b>Total</b>	<b>Ksh 10,352,349</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>£58,130.40</b>

## Kenya Projects



## Trustees' Statement

As we close our seventh year, our Trustees remain a very important part of the charity, offering invaluable support and guidance. Together, we make every important decision through open discussions and collaboration, ensuring that we steer the charity in the right direction.

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards.

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- observe the methods and principles of the Charities SORP
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether applicable accounting standards have been followed, subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 1993, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the constitution.

They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities. The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charity and financial information included on the charity's website.

This Report and Accounts was approved by the trustees on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2023 and signed on their behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon West". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

**Simon West FRSA**  
**Managing Director and Chair of Trustees**

# Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Word Forest

I report to the Trustees on my examination of the accounts of Word Forest, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), for the year ended 30th March 2024.

## Responsibilities and Basis of Report

As the charity Trustees of the CIO you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the CIO's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

## Independent Examiner's Statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of the Act; or
- the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have come across no matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

The accounts were independently examined and approved on 23rd April 2024.



Hannah Foster  
392 Wood Lane, Sheffield, South Yorkshire S6 6AQ

## From Our Team

### Clare Nasir: Patron

Projects that remove CO<sub>2</sub> and slow down global heating are essential for our planet's future. Urgency is paramount. Every day that passes exacerbates the challenges we face to survive this crisis. We need to act swiftly and decisively.

Yet carbon offsetting is still offered up in many guises. Far greater clarity and transparency are needed if business leaders are expected to plot a course to a world where decarbonisation is more than a buzz word and our planet is meteorologically more stable and sustainable.

Over the past 40 years, a lot of deep thinking has occurred and innovation has come a long way. Startling technological advancements have been made and some purport to be the silver bullet required to solve our climate emergency. Despite their efforts, the sum of these parts has completely fallen short of the whole - a well balanced Earth. The silver bullet remains elusive and the climate emergency trajectory continues to spiral.

Where are we with carbon offsetting right now? It is almost 30 years since COP1 in Berlin and a decade since the celebrated Paris Agreement where Article 6 created a framework for countries to cooperate on carbon offsetting projects.

Word Forest is just about to release a fascinating report on carbon drawdown technologies - if you'd like to receive a free copy, [email\\_team@wordforest.org](mailto:email_team@wordforest.org). It is worth noting that, upon closer inspection, some of the solutions they investigated are relatively embryonic options. Some have substantial implementational issues which could inhibit the rapid progress that is needed.

They may render some of these credible technological solutions contributorily useful but fatally handicapped in terms of efficacy and expeditiousness. That said, they undoubtedly have a collective role to play in the multi-disciplined, urgent solutions the Earth desperately needs.

With varying degrees of speed and success, I suspect they will all help decarbonise the atmosphere to some degree. However, what's needed immediately right now is a viable, affordable and swiftly executable plan: enter Word Forest.

Which CO<sub>2</sub> reduction method is able to provide the rapid, consistent, reliable assistance our planet requires today? Our report examines well-understood, traditional solutions, along with newer, more complex alternatives for CO<sub>2</sub> removal from the Earth's atmosphere. The methods explored have the capability to draw down and lock in this shockingly abundant greenhouse gas which sits at the root of our climate crisis.

One of the strongest conclusions of our report is that the most affordable and easily implementable solution is planting trees in Kenya, whilst providing a multi-faceted level of care to the amazing people who plant and tend them.

Trees in Kenya, like other tropical regions around the world, grow at an astonishing rate. In some cases, up to 10 times faster than in temperate and tundra latitudes. They have the ability to lock in ¼ of a tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> in 5-7 years, which is astonishing.



Consider the additional benefits to Kenyans from the production of fruit, nuts, food, medicine and other commodities. One is easily able to grasp the dent they could make in hunger, malnutrition and poverty: what a phenomenal bonus.

The UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, frequently advocates for immediate climate action. He refers to our precarious situation as: *'The era of global boiling'*, which rather renders the 1970's term 'global warming' obsolete.

Until transparency across the entire value chain of the carbon offset marketplace has been addressed and clarified, the credibility of all schemes will continue to be threatened by issues surrounding their efficacy. It is highly likely it will take time to resolve and in truth, our planet simply doesn't have the time to waste.

Whilst technological solutions continue to establish their rightful positions in the pecking order, may I be so bold as to suggest you employ Occam's razor and boost Word Forest's remarkable endeavours to reforest Kenya?



## Bill McGuire: Special Scientific Advisor to Word Forest

*Professor Emeritus of Geophysical & Climate Hazards at UCL. His latest book, Hothouse Earth: an Inhabitant's Guide, is published by Icon Books.*



Despatches from the climate front rarely – if ever – bring good news, but the latest carries a truly terrifying message: the Amazon Rainforest, a critical element in the planet's respiratory system, is in far deeper trouble than we thought. The Amazon region has been under colossal pressure for many decades, primarily via destructive logging on an industrial scale. But more recently, climate breakdown has begun to take an ever greater toll. Severe drought conditions have become far more frequent, in turn spawning immense wildfires that have destroyed vast areas of the forest. As a consequence, the Amazon has switched from a carbon sink, which sucks up carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, to a carbon source.

Climate models reveal that the Amazon ecosystem makes up one of the planet's key potential tipping points. If conditions become too hot and dry, the forest will enter a period of permanent terminal decline, and will be replaced by grassland. The latest research suggests that we may already be closing in on this transition, which would be devastating for the planet and a huge defeat in the fight to stop climate breakdown becoming catastrophic. Before a stable system tips, it often undergoes something called critical slowdown, which means that it recovers increasingly sluggishly in response to external shocks, and this seems to be what we are seeing in the Amazon. In the past, the forest has recovered quickly from drought conditions, but four once a century very dry episodes in the space of 20 years has the forest reeling. Almost 40 percent of the forest is struggling to recover, leading researchers to speculate that this might be an early indicator of large-scale ecosystem collapse.

As the heat ramps up globally, more drought is undoubtedly waiting in the wings, but there is good news to be had. Those parts of the Amazon managed by indigenous peoples are bucking the trend to an extraordinary degree. While the areas under their care take up 340 million tonnes of carbon a year, the rest of the forest now pumps out 270 million tonnes – about equal to the annual emissions of France – over the same period. There is a huge lesson to be had here, which is that local people know what is best for the environment they occupy, and this is invariably good for the environment and the climate too.

This is why the work of Word Forest in Kenya is so critical. It sets an example, not only in terms of caring for existing forest, but also for planting new fast-growing trees that can suck up even more carbon. This is absolutely vital if we are to limit the global temperature rise sufficiently to prevent the tipping of critical biological and physical systems, such as the Amazon Rainforest, the Greenland Ice Sheet, and the Gulf Stream, which would translate inevitable dangerous climate breakdown into a climate cataclysm.

Trees are the key in so many ways, not only because together they make up such a huge carbon repository, but also because they support so many other species that are suffering as human activities continue to pump up the heat and extreme weather. They are – quite literally – our future. If we want our children and their children to inherit any sort of world worth living in, then we have no choice but to keep managing and keep planting.

## Eva Jefwa: Head of Kenya Operations

The end and beginning of Word Forest's financial year is always a significant time for reflection and gratitude. It's when I, along with the Kenya team, express our heartfelt thanks to the entire Word Forest family—donors, corporate partners, and volunteers—for their continued support in Garashi and Rusinga Island. Over the years, I've learned that making the earth a better place requires more than just planting trees. Any contribution, whether in time or money, helps fund our reforestation efforts in Kenya.



This past year, we've undertaken several important projects, most notably the construction of the Edible Classroom at our Permaculture Training Centre (PTC). Completed between April and June 2023, the classroom was built by the Mothers of the Forest, who made the bricks themselves. This empowering process transformed the classroom into a space not only for learning but also for emotional respite. In the Giriama culture, a woman often loses her identity after marriage. However, in the Edible Classroom, we use our first names, creating an environment where age is just a number, and women can simply be themselves, even if only for a while.

The Edible Classroom offers numerous workshops and lessons, from literacy and numeracy to food and nutrition, mat making, and permaculture. Its white roof helps keep the space cool, and when not in use by the Mothers, it serves as a workspace and dining hall for the staff. Meals are now shared together as a team, highlighting the power of community.

Throughout the year, the Mothers of the Forest have also participated in various in-house workshops focused on creating sustainable income streams. Thanks to Tracey's report, *Mitigating the Climate Crisis Through Education*, we are now expanding our lessons to bring education into the broader community. Mental health is another key priority, and our Health and Wellbeing sessions have created a unique space where we openly discuss our challenges and support one another.

The numbers speak volumes about the impact of these programs. In Garashi, the Mothers have participated in 224 hours of learning and care, including literacy, numeracy, permaculture, and rest. The Rusinga Island Mothers have accumulated 334 hours, covering similar subjects with additional time dedicated to social activities.

In Garashi, the Mothers have also opened a small shop, primarily selling clothes but also surplus produce from their farms. This venture has boosted their confidence and social skills, as they now engage in discussions, ask questions, and contribute more actively than before. One of our core permaculture principles is producing zero waste, and in line with this, we installed guttering on two buildings to collect rainwater, filling a 10,000-litre reservoir. This initiative has not only conserved water but also reduced our costs.

Another milestone was expanding our tree nursery. Initially designed to hold 10,000 saplings, it has since been upgraded to accommodate 100,000 saplings, including fruit, nut, ornamental, and medicinal trees, both exotic and indigenous. This diversity helps balance the ecosystem and promotes drought tolerance. Recently, we constructed a steel framework over the nursery, covered with shade and insect netting, creating a locust-proof, water-saving structure that will significantly enhance our operations.

Tree planting remains at the heart of our work. While construction at the PTC slowed our tree-planting efforts in Garashi, where we planted 10,000 trees, we planted 34,070 trees on Rusinga Island, totaling 44,070 trees for 2023-2024. With our improved nursery, we expect even greater success in the coming year.

Finally, as a Christmas tradition, the entire Word Forest team in Kenya, including the Mothers of the Forest, received practical gifts—this year, each was given two sturdy chairs. For many of the Mothers, who lack basic furniture, these chairs provided a much-needed place to rest, highlighting the importance of small, meaningful gestures. In conclusion, it has been a year of growth, learning, and resilience. We look forward to continuing our efforts to combat climate change, empower communities, and restore the earth, one tree at a time.

## Juliet Anyanzwa: Mothers of the Forest Garashi

Behind every great woman in Kenya, there is another great woman!

Women are generally known for their innate qualities of endurance, empathy, creativity, tolerance, dignity, gentleness and their integrity, among many others.

We, as Mothers of the Forest, regularly combine our efforts and come together to share our unique perspectives on knowledge about trees and saplings, life in general, the environment and much more. We also support each other to learn new skills.

Over the years, Word Forest has played an important role in transforming our lives for the positive, through many different routes.



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### Women's Empowerment

At our Permaculture Training Centre (PTC) of which, I am proud to remind you, we crafted the building blocks with our own hands, we have an Edible Classroom. In this learning space, we participate in literacy and numeracy lessons, cooking classes, social life skills, we embrace education about climate change, tree planting; other lessons take place here too.

In our literacy and numeracy classes, the Mothers are taught how to read and write both in English and Swahili. The Mothers are also taught much needed numeracy skills. These two lessons are enabling them to be able to respond to familiar and unfamiliar situations. They do this by deploying their mathematics and reading skills, which help them make better informed decisions and make problem solving more efficient too.

During these lessons, the Mothers are always happy and excited. Kabibi is among the Mothers who feels very grateful and lucky to get this opportunity for learning as an adult woman. She is always the first to settle down in class and she waits patiently for the teacher and other women to arrive.

She tells me: *"Sikujua naeza jua kusoma na kuandika katika umri huu wangu lakini sasa naeza saidia wanangu kufanya kazi ya ziada nashukuru sana".* In English, this means *"I never knew if I would ever learn how to read and write. Now I can help my children with their homework."*

Kadzo added: *"Naeza andika jina langu vizuri jambo ambalo hapo awali sikueza kuandika hii ni furaha ilioje".* Translated, this means: *"I can write my name without any difficulties, what a wonderful privilege."*

Through coming and working together, we've been able to achieve a lot. Most of our lives have changed for the better. We've shared our weaknesses and strengths which has helped to shed more light on our previous caged life.

The Mothers of the Forest have table banking, where we saved money for a whole year. After acquiring the knowledge and understanding of how to run a business, we came up with the idea to open a shop with the money we had saved from this 'merry go round'. Mothers are now running a shop which is doing well due to the knowledge and skills we have acquired during our business lessons.

Nuru said: *"Mbeleni nilikuwa nafanya biashara lakini sikua na ujuzi wa kuendelea vyema, lakini kupitia mafundisho naeza endelesha biashara yangu vizuri".* This means: *"Back then I had a business and I didn't have enough knowledge on how to run a business but now through learning I can run my business well."*

*"Since we started learning about cooking methods, it has become a key which unlocked our happiness, peace and love in my family. Most of the time my husband and I used to differ*

on how I used to cook and present food to the table. I never did it with passion and love and now I am a superhero”, Nyevu added.

*“Mimi nilidhani kusoma na kuandika ndiyo mwisho wa Kila kitu lakini kumbe sivyo. Tunaeza jifunza kazi za mikono kama vile kutengeneza sabuni, matofali,viatu vya shanga, mikufu, kushona mikeka ili kujikimu kimaisha”,* comments Sidi Alisema. That is: *“I thought reading and writing was the end of everything, but it's not. We teach handicrafts such as making soap, bricks, beaded shoes, necklaces and sewing mats to make a living.”*

Kafedha aliongezea said: *“Ninalipia mwanangu karo ya shule Kwa kuuza sabuni na kushona viatu vya shanga.Sasa nimempunguzia mume wangu mzigo wa kulipia watoto karo ya shule”.* Translated, it means: *“I do pay my children's school fees by selling liquid soap and sandals that have helped to ease my husband's burden.”*

## Tree Planting

Trees play a great role when it comes to climate change. We, Mothers of the Forest, plant trees and take good care. We've learnt different ways to conserve our forest in order to restore and curb the long term problem which has resulted in climate crises.

Every mother has planted at least 50 trees at home. The target is to plant 100 each at our homes by the end of this year.

Dama explains: *“The trees I planted at home make my home cool and attractive. Trees are a habitat to many species. Early in the morning, the weather is always cool and one can hear sweet wake up songs from birds. I encourage mothers to plant more trees.”*

Sidi adds: *“We have learnt a lot about tree planting and we need to implement it in our homes. We will have cool and fresh air like Dama, and our community will not be affected by climate change. Also, we will be able to plant food crops and harvest good yields.”*

At the PTC the mothers have an acre of land where they plant maize, beans, green grams and vegetables; we share the harvests amongst ourselves and also sell the extra.

For half an hour in our meetings we sit and just be. We take this time to share experiences and challenges and best of all, just be there for each other.

Neema asked Rehema: *“How can I ensure that my husband stays focused and caring?”*

*“I do this by cooking well and showing my love for him and our family,”* Rehema answered.

Rehema is aged 39 and a mother of 5 children. She encouraged us all by giving us a piece of advice and hope. She went ahead and narrated how she was stigmatised because of her health condition. Through counselling and guidance she absorbed it and moved on.

Rehema advised us not to allow setbacks in life to stop us from facing each new day with determination.

Rehema added: *“Through the encouragement I receive from my mentor, I am able to rise beyond my problems and my struggles and I always have a positive attitude about life”.*

I hope you'll see from this snapshot discussion with the Mothers of the Forest that this really is a wonderful experience; the Mothers show how their lives have turned over a new leaf. We will continue to express our feelings in our meetings because it helps us greatly to cope with our ever changing lives.

Thank you for all you do to help us do the activities we do. You are making lots of memories here as you make wonderful things happen for us all.

## Sue Jueno: Special Projects & Fundraising

In April 2019, UK barrister and ecocide visionary Polly Higgins lost life to cancer. She'd spent her last decade making ecocide globally recognised as a crime against humanity. After she died, Word Forest was approached to see if we would help create a heart-shaped Legacy Forest in Polly's name. A campaign was set and contributors from all over the world donated to make the forest a reality.



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Legacy forests can take time to arrange, so in summer 2020 after discussions with our charity partners, Awaken Love For Africa, Polly's 3,000 trees were planted. It was adjacent to their project, The Gideons, an orphanage that looks after almost 1,000 youngsters.

Three years on in summer 2023, we are delighted that the heart shaped forest has been extremely well cared for, grown beautifully and is now identifiable on Google Earth. Since planting the 3,000 trees have drawn down around 750 tonnes of CO2 and other pollutants. They've cleaned the air we breathe all over the planet, created precious new habitats for wildlife and shade for anything that needs it. A lush and verdant living reminder of the life of the amazing environmentalist, Polly Higgins.

### Grants

Since COVID 19 gaining funding from grants has become increasingly difficult. Trusts and foundations are drowning in the volume of applications from charities. Unfortunately they just do not have enough funding to go around. Although this can create an air of despondency, we have tried to increase the quality and volume of our bids, and look at our projects from a different angle - hopefully opening up a new sector of funding that we can apply for.

### Apparel

During 2023 our fundraising clothing store was updated to become gender neutral. The 16 main designs are now offered as t-shirts - in crew neck, scoop neck, relaxed fit and v neck, and long sleeves - in long sleeve t-shirt, regular hoodie, crew neck sweater and relaxed fit hoodie. These, as well as our Phat, Kenyan Botany, Recycled, Celebri-Tee and Kids Collections are all 100% organic cotton. These products can also be returned and remade into new garments again and again and again.

Our most successful design is our Celebri-Tee collaboration with Mr Benn, who 'realised, as if by magic, that trees are the key' (Actor Richard Coyle shown modelling the t-shirt, stage right!)

## Sue Jueno, Special Projects & Fundraising

## Jed Robertson: Digital Media Specialist

This financial year, Word Forest's digital media output has focused on both the creation of new content and how we can use existing content to tell new stories or to bring our message to new audiences.

We undertook another wonderful collaboration with Editors4Impact to condense our documentary, #TreesAreTheKey, into a ten minute short for corporate audiences. At a quarter of original length, capturing the essence of the full work in a way that would entice new corporate partners but still display the depth of our work posed an exciting challenge. With the help of Thomas Winward, the editor we were paired with, I believe we have produced a wonderful new asset that exhibits our mission and accomplishments in a package that is digestible by those who may not have the time to watch a forty minute documentary. It also came at no additional cost to us, which shows the power of charities working together and sharing skills.

This year also saw the completion of the Permaculture Teaching Centre build in Garashi. Thanks to the purchase of a new tablet for Eva, the quality of the onsite videos from our colleagues in Kenya has massively improved and allowed me to produce a video that sits more inline with the expectations of European and Western audiences. This upgrade has allowed us to create more captivating content that is less likely to be skipped over by potential donors and shows the details of the work where previously it wasn't possible.

Another piece of content to highlight is the song commissioned by Eva, composed by Kenyan songwriter and producer Manu Bayaz and performed entirely by Kenyan musicians. This wonderful surprise has allowed me to progress towards another personal goal of mine which was to use as much media created by Kenyan artists as possible. Manu kindly also provided me with an instrumental version and the vocal recordings, allowing me to create bespoke versions for future projects. Combining this with recordings of songs taken during our monitoring trips to Kenya will create many new exciting possibilities for our video content going forward into the next year.



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# Our joint commitment to address the climate challenge



We are proud to be investing in a joint effort with Word Forest to create our own Gold Standard offsetting programme, as an ongoing asset to Word Forest's mission.

Our work in business makes clear the scale of challenge that lies ahead in addressing climate change.

We are delighted to be working with Word Forest to make our own contribution to addressing the challenge.

