



Mill Cross Retreats Green Values

Read all about what we do, why it matters & what you can do to help!

We are committed to trying harder and doing more to achieve high standards of socially and environmentally sustainable business practices.

WHY BOTHER?

The environment really matters to us & we see its destruction around us every day. We are committed to making your stay as enjoyable & relaxing as we can but equally about making it as sustainable and green as possible. We very much want to provide our guests & visitors with a holiday or workshop of high quality whilst supporting our local community & preserving our beautiful surroundings for the prosperity & enjoyment of future generations. We pro-actively participate in good environmental practices & are members of the Rattery environment group (REG) to do what we can in the wider village and parish.

We are parents to 6 children & grandparents to 7 & our time is limited to do our bit to leave a world for them. We don't want to sound preachy- but we want to do what we can to minimise the damage we inflict on the planet for future generations. We helped make the mess, so we have to help clear it up! We accept that we're not perfect too- but we always try to do everything we can to get it right.

In planning & managing our small business at Mill Cross Retreats, we have looked at all our inputs & outputs & tried to minimise the environmental impact of them all, as much as possible. We don't think this is at odds with your enjoyment. Indeed we think it enhances it & we ask you to commit to join us in playing your part here when you visit or stay & when you return home.

Thank you for taking the time to read & to play your part



Emma & Kevin with Juno in 2023

BUILDINGS...WHAT HAVE WE DONE & WHAT DO WE DO?

The house we bought at Mill Cross was extended in the 1980s from the original bungalow & sadly, not very well built or insulated. We have made every effort to add to insulation and maintain heat, for example double insulating the attic.

The Skylark is extremely well insulated & stays super toasty. The wonderful Jenny Wren, hand built by Kevin is wrapped in an eco-thermal blanket. Kevin built Jenny Wren from a frame and base supplied by Blackdown Shepherd's Huts & used locally sourced larch to build it. We chose not to use a concrete base, but instead dug out & compacted the ground for it. Wherever possible, we have used materials we already had, for example making window sills & shelves from wood we had in stock & re-purposed building materials.





The lovely eco-friendly Jenny Wren- hand built by Kevin

THE BAKEHOUSE

When we built the extension that houses The Bakehouse, we used eco friendly building materials including the “looks like shredded wheat” woodwool for the ceiling & used natural slate flooring.

Our wonderful, Gozney woodfired oven uses well seasoned, local Dartmoor wood & briquettes that are produced at a local timber yard through their offcuts.

We source all our food with care- organic is our first concern and we use Doves Farm organics flour in all our baking, produced in the UK from UK grains. We use whatever we can from our kitchen garden, again, grown seasonally & organically & by 2025, we hope to be more or less self-sufficient here in veg. We grow lots of apples, pears, gooseberries, golden raspberries & blackberries which we use for cooking, preserving & juicing.

Other food items are tomatoes (we use organic Italian, sourced along with our other dried & canned goods from the Bristol based workers cooperative, Essential Trading) & buy the vast majority of other items including olive oil & cured meats from Ben’s Farm Shop. Meat is bought locally including from our direct neighbours (lamb & beef, raised organically) & otherwise is purchased from Ben’s or Halls Butchers in Totnes.

We passionately believe in organic, local & seasonal & are committed to buying sustainably so that our guests, diners & workshop participants get the tastiest, nourishing & best of what’s available.



Emma in the Bakehouse- can you see the ceiling?

It's "woodwool" which is a recycled building material that insulates really well.

ENERGY

We have photo-voltaic (PV or “solar”) panels on the roof of Mill Cross House & on our barn which supplies much of our electricity. To capitalise on this, we use our dishwasher and our washing machine (& we have a lot of washing from the holiday accommodation) only during the day and whenever possible, on sunniest days. We are confident that the PVs on the barn provide all the electricity for our washing! We line dry all of our washing unless the weather is especially grim. We heat water during the day, using solar where possible & the electric radiators in the cottages on timers, will draw from solar. We have put these radiators on timers and ask guests to use them prudently.

We have our electricity supply from renewable green electricity. Our firewood is sourced from a local Dartmoor wood supplier. It has been locally sourced, barn dried (kiln dried isn't always eco-friendly) & is very dry and efficient. We also use eco-briquettes provided by a local joinery. You can't beat the warmth from a log burner! We provide eco-friendly firelighters and used newspaper (courtesy of Emma's Mum & our neighbours) for lighting. Our kindling is made from our own willow and small branches from pollarding trees. We are happy to light fires for guests ahead of them returning from a day out so that heating doesn't get left on.



The woodburners only use very dry, well seasoned wood & kindling made from our own willow

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

We are currently investigating the costs & benefits of EV chargers but are happy for guests to use standard electric charging points at cost. We can signpost you to EV chargers nearby within a ten minute drive.

WASTE

You will have seen that we make a point of providing clear recycling info and compost, general, bathroom & outside recycling bins. We really emphasise the need to recycle effectively as it is such a simple thing we can all do to aid the environment. Please make sure you read the guide & follow it- asking us if you are not sure.

These are;

There is a compost bin in the kitchen - you can put any **raw or cooked food waste** into this. There are new compost bags under the sink.

When they are full, please tie & put into the galvanised bin outside your property. Other things that can go into the galvanised bin (items must be washed clean and free of food waste) are:

- **Thick plastic i.e. food packaging or tubs** (NOT plastic wrappers/clingfilm - these go in general waste, not recycling)
- **Cans/tins**
- **Foil**
- **Cardboard (including loo rolls inners, please)**
- **Paper (including loo roll wrappers & newspapers)**

Thank you for doing this. We will sort & recycle- please do not put your rubbish in our bins. If your bin is getting full, please let us know and we will empty it for you.

Clean glass bottles & jars (no lids please) can go into the "GLASS" collection point that is behind the extension on the side of Mill Cross House. Thank you for popping them in there before you go.

For anything else, i.e. landfill, please use the bins in the kitchen and bathroom. If they are full, please tie up and let us know - we will put them in our landfill bin. There are spare bags under the kitchen sink.

We encourage & ask you to only buy the food you plan to eat during your your stay & to avoid plastic & waste wherever possible. It is really worrying to see food waste that is left sometimes. Please see our recommendations for local/farm shops & help us to do our bit to save the planet & support local business- thank you.

Please take any left over food & drink away with you or compost it.

WATER

We have mains water supplied from Dartmoor but as we are in Devon, the whole county is subject to the many thousands of tourists who visit every year & the drain (no pun intended) on water. SWW are also complicit in not stopping leaks & we look forward to the time when this is addressed.

The net result is that we are continually being asked to preserve water. We ask that you, like us, use water consciously, boiling only what is needed for example, for a cuppa (not boiling the whole kettle) & not overusing baths/showers.

Because we are 'Beyond the Mains' for water & sewage, our septic tank must dispose of wastes efficiently. However, it does depend on nothing harmful to its hard-working bacteria which break down the waste being flushed into the tank. This is why we ask you to join the lovely 99% of guests who do not flush anything other than toilet paper.

Toilet Twinning - Mill Cross Retreats is twinned with a latrine in Malawi

THIS TOILET HAS BEEN
TWINNED
MILL CROSS RETREATS



WITH A LATRINE IN
MALAWI

Latitude: -13.878611, Longitude: 32.9575
Bechani



1 in 4 people around the world don't have a loo.

By supporting Toilet Twinning you are helping to flush away poverty.

Tearfund is a Registered Charity Number 265464 (England and Wales) and Number SC037624 (Scotland).

CLEANING & TOILETRIES

We use Faith in Nature toiletries which are provided to you as part of your stay & Ecover hand wash for the kitchen. If you like the Faith in Nature products, these are available at Ben's Farm Shop to

take home. We buy these in bulk & refill to minimise plastic waste. We provide compostable, non-chemical wipes for the odd clean up/mop up and these can be put in your compostable food waste bin.

We use bamboo kitchen roll & tissues- neither of which contain harmful plastics. You can put them in the compost bin. We also use Who Gives a Crap toilet paper as it is sustainable & compostable and have twinned our loos with a latrine in Malawi.

In The Bakehouse & the Bakehouse loos as well as Jenny Wren, we use the French style soap on a stand which lasts for hundreds of washes and is re-fillable. All the cleaning materials we use are Bio D or Ecover. We use microfibre cloths and natural brushes. We don't use bleach which would damage our septic tank and is harmful to the environment.

WOOD FIRED HOT TUBS



We don't use any chemicals in our hot tubs & they are cleaned using eco-friendly Bio D products. We drain the water into our gardens.

FOOD



Ben's Farm Shop is our go-to

Virtually all the food & drink we supply to you in your accommodation is organic. Using local produce reduces 'Food Miles', so sourcing local food is very important to us & additionally, it supports local jobs. We supply locally sourced and homemade food to order as we understand that buying the right amount for your stay can be tricky & we can take some of that hard work out for you. It is really disheartening to see the amount of food waste left by some guests; nearly always stacks of supermarket food overbought and then uneaten.

We respectfully ask that you minimise plastic waste & consciously try to buy only what you need during your stay to avoid waste.

We are lucky to have Ben's Farm Shop very nearby (linked to Riverford Organics) & we also provide a bottle of Luscombe Elderflower Fizz from lovely Luscombe organics which is about 3 miles away. We supply all the basics like olive oil, salt & pepper, herbs, locally made tomato ketchup & our own produce to reduce food waste (& to give you what you need!) We are always happy to give you items from our stock cupboard (i.e. a little flour, an onion or a couple of garlic bulbs, different herbs- some of which we grow) to save you having to buy a large pack or even go out for things when you just need a little.

If we could ask you to do one positive thing for the environment & the economy when you stay with us, it is to **buy local & preferably organic**, ideally in our local farm shops- see our shopping guide in the Mill Cross Retreats guide. For dried goods including coffee, tea, herbal teas & herbs, we use Essential trading which is a workers collective based in Bristol, who buy from ethical sources. For milk & everyday purchases we use our local post office at Dartington who stock a brilliant range of Riverford (organic) Dairy & Co-op foods.

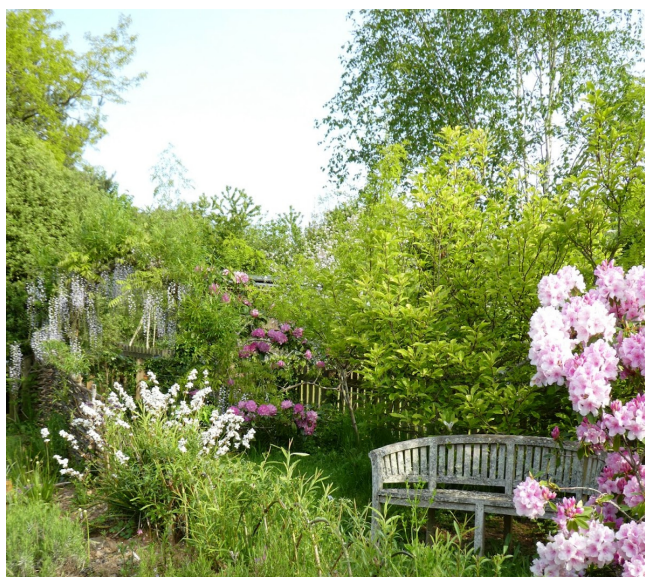
Why does organic matter so much & why do we commit so much time and energy to buying it, growing it & promoting it? Organic food is kinder to the environment (no chemicals & is grown seasonally), it's more sustainable, generally has increased yield, supports local farming and minimises air & road miles, kinder to you as it contains increased nutrients, kinder to livestock as animals are not given antibiotics, growth hormones or fed other animal by-products & better for your gut biome & general health. Without pesticides, the insect population can grow, and with them predators such as birds, which enables a greater flourishing of wildlife. Hurrah!

PLACES TO EAT

We have a list of recommendations for you to eat out during your stay where we know food is locally sourced and the environmental impact is as minimal as it can be. Top of our list are The Bull in Totnes & Riverford Field Kitchen because they really go the extra mile for staff welfare, food welfare and ethical sourcing. See more info on our welcome info.

FLOWERS

We grow our own flowers here as importing flowers adds to flight pollution & also the flower industry is notorious for slave labour & unfair working conditions. If you would like to buy a bunch of our seasonal cut flowers when we have them, we are happy to provide them. In the Spring, you are welcome to take some daffs from the banks around us- they are very plentiful!





OUR LAND



Mill Cross Retreats is west of beautiful Totnes and is the South Hams in lovely Rattery, a very small, peaceful, rural village. It is a peaceful haven set in an area of natural beauty. We have 6 acres of land here and we steward it by managing and maintaining our (mostly indigenous) trees & willow stand, growing organic vegetables and flowers, keeping goats, chickens and ducks- all reared organically.

We are passionate about our trees, shrubs and plants as they support the delicate ecosystem that matters so much to us. We have a wealth of mainly indigenous varieties & when planting, only choose indigenous plants & trees. We source what we need from Hill House Nursery- a brilliant, locally run family nursery- well worth a visit. There is an abundance of flora, fauna and wildlife on our doorstep and we do everything we can to respect, maintain and improve this beautiful environment.

We work hard to protect native species and nurture our trees and flowers. We have an environmental planting plan which prolongs the life span of existing plants and trees, encourages the growth of new species and ensures that trees that are damaged or dying are replaced. When we do take down trees, we use the wood from them for kindling or logs and leave all the brash as habitat.

We provide bird boxes, feeding tables and small hand built homes for insects & leave water out in warm weather for our lovely hedgehog friends.

Our tree prunings are used for kindling and we buy local wood chippings which discourages weed growth- we don't use any chemicals for weed control.

We leave the grass long in the meadows/woodland between paths & leave brash and cut wood as habitat piles. We have quite a colony of hedgehogs so if you are up in the field, especially early evening, watch out for them.

Grass cuttings are used for composting and mulch.

We have bats, owls and many birds here at Mill Cross too. If you sit patiently in the meadow in the evening, you will see a good selection and may well see owls who like to hunt here at dusk.

If you are exercising your dog on our land, you can leave dog poo to rot as long as it's not in the middle of a path (you can flick it into the undergrowth).



We grow our own fruit & vegetables organically here.

OUR MENAGERIE



We keep goats, chickens & ducks here at Mill Cross. We feed them all organically. The goats like nothing more than "stripping the willow" and the chickens & ducks pttter happily aournd outside in the gardens & land.

IN SUMMARY- WHAT WE DO

- Use low energy light bulbs
- Have outside lights on sensors and use solar powered lights wherever we can
- Put timers on radiators and outside lights
- Buy organic bed linen and Devon wool duvets
- Buy good quality so it lasts
- Re-purpose, recycle and re-use
- We sort your clean recycling, burning what we can, composting what we can and effectively recycling the remainder.
- Collect rainwater for watering plants
- Keep fridges defrosted & freezer boxes ice free. We turn them off when guests leave
- Buy large containers to refill bottles of washing up liquid, Faith in Nature toiletries & handwash to reduce plastic
- We use bamboo and unbleached tissues and kitchen rolls

- We use Who Gives a Crap toilet paper which is eco-conscious, doesn't use plastic and supports clean water & toilets in poorer countries
- We use bamboo kitchen roll & tissues
- We use bio-degradable non-chemical wipes.
- We don't use aerosols
- We use environmentally friendly cleaning & laundry products
- We wash at 30 degrees
- When we clean our holiday accommodation, we keep the almost empty toilet rolls and use them in our home.
- We provide bird boxes, feeding points and habitat piles as homes for insects
- We compost leftovers & have a wormery which breaks down food and produces compost for the garden
- Where we have more bulky veg waste like ends of carrots or stalks of red cabbage, we cut them up and feed them to the goats (who LOVE them)
- Make our own willow hurdles, bean poles & fencing from our coppiced willow
- We give the goats cut willow to "strip" before we use it- they love willow leaves to eat
- We mulch to manage weeds
- We don't use any chemicals in our wood fired hot tubs and we re-use water from them on our garden & land
- We don't use pesticides & we choose natural alternatives for managing our crops
- We are members of Devon Wildlife Trust & Rattery Environment Group

WHAT CAN YOU DO (during your stay & when you go home)?

You can make a difference when you;

- Choose local and seasonal
- Buy only the food that you need rather than too much which gets wasted
- Choose not to buy items wrapped in single use plastic containers
- Choose instead, cardboard wrapped or paper wrapped or even better, not wrapped at all- shops like Ben's, Annie's or stalls on Totnes Market all sell loose food you don't need to bag.
- Use refill shops- almost every town has at least one
- Refill a metal or bamboo water bottle
- Refill bamboo hot cups for coffee/tea and don't be fooled by "compostable" takeaway cups which usually end up in landfill
- If you do have takeaway cardboard containers, clean all food waste from them and recycle.
- Clean and sort your recycling
- Make sure the freezer door is shut properly and don't turn the fridge up too high
- Turn off lights & heating when you go out
- Only use radiators for as long as needed
- Boil only the water you need in the kettle for that use
- Turn off the TV rather than leaving it on standby
- Don't leave your phone charging overnight- give it a blast in the morning and use solar energy from the PVs
- Avoid products that are harmful to the environment (sprays, chemical based products, pesticides, products grown using chemicals)

- Buy quality over quantity or buy secondhand
- Avoid disposables- especially BBQs & plastic bottles
- Cycle, walk, use public transport wherever you can



Thank you for taking the time to read our Green Values- we really hope you will join us in doing our bit for the planet.