

Celebrating 10 years of Positive Impact

2014 - 2024



The DFN Foundation is celebrating 10 years of tackling very challenging societal problems and delivering transformational outcomes.

Some of the most pressing challenges struggle to attract mainstream support because they are viewed as risky, difficult or simply impossible.

We believe you can make a difference by bringing together the right talent, operating with a business mindset, and staying laser focused on specific goals.

We have demonstrated time and again that, even with the most challenging issues, you can deliver sustainable outcomes that exceed all expectations.

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Welcome from our Founder and Chairman



David Forbes-Nixon OBE
Founder & Chairman

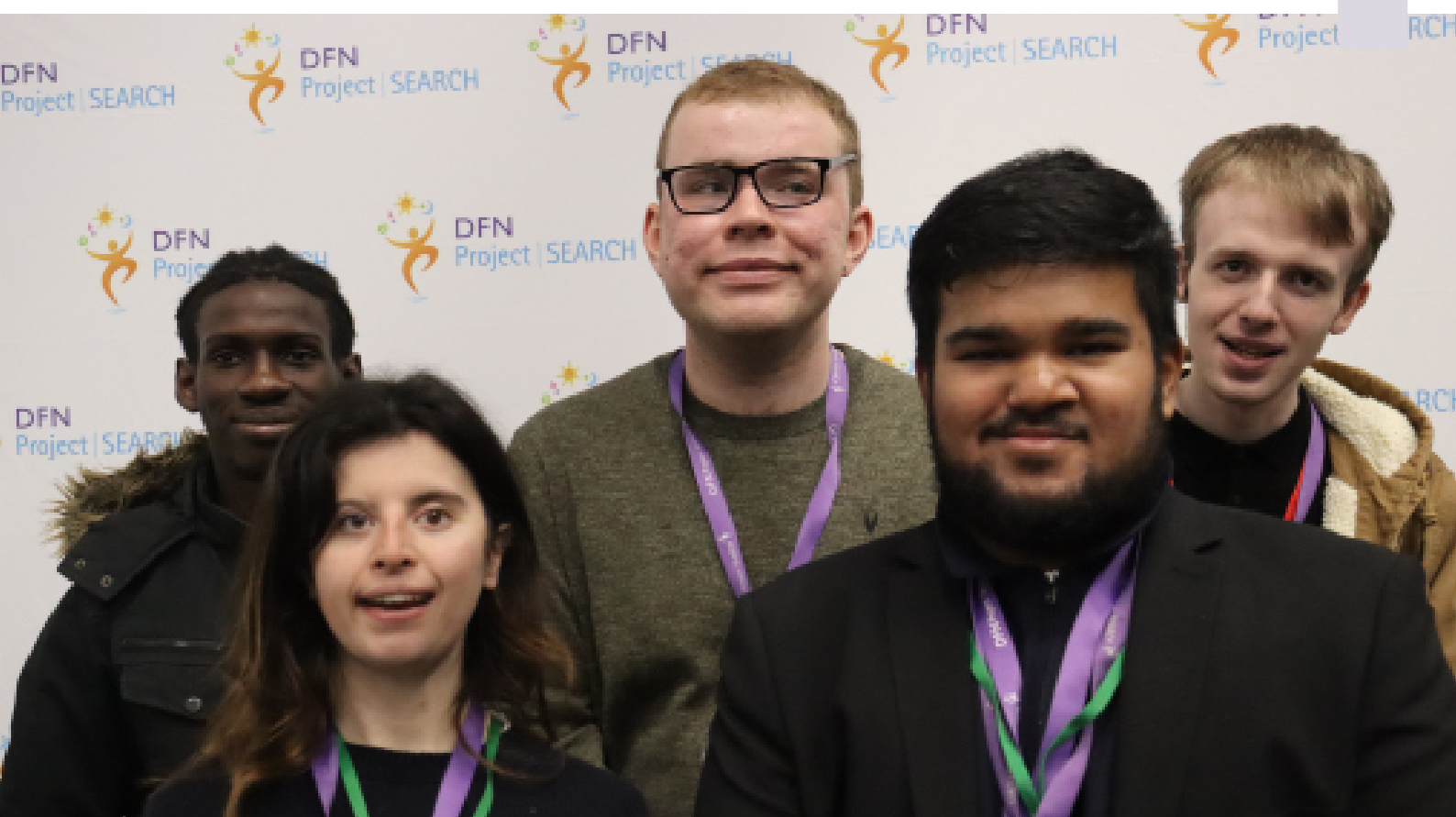
10 years ago, in 2014, I established the David Forbes-Nixon Family Charitable Foundation ('DFN Foundation') and endowed the charity with shares in Alcentra, a fund management company I founded in 2002.

I was inspired to set up the DFN Foundation by two of my heroes: by my youngest son Charlie who has learning and physical disabilities; and by my mother Jacquelin Forbes-Nixon who died of multiple myeloma, an incurable bone marrow cancer.

I wanted the Foundation to focus on these 2 main causes that I was passionate about: supporting education and employment opportunities for young disabled people; and finding a cure for multiple myeloma.

I assembled a high-quality board of trustees for the DFN Foundation and we agreed to focus on education, employment, healthcare and wildlife conservation alongside establishing four main goals for the first 10 years:

Education: to create a world class special needs school at Undershaw and to promote the development of best practice in special needs education which will deliver great outcomes for young people with learning disabilities and autism.



Employability: to positively influence current practice so that young people with special educational needs and disabilities receive high quality work-related learning and improved access to long-term paid employment.

Healthcare: to improve survival rates of myeloma and advance cures through strategic funding of high-quality research which will benefit patients to live longer lives.

Wildlife Conservation: to ensure the survival of the British butterfly, through increasing awareness and sponsoring the Big Butterfly Count, a UK-wide citizen science survey.

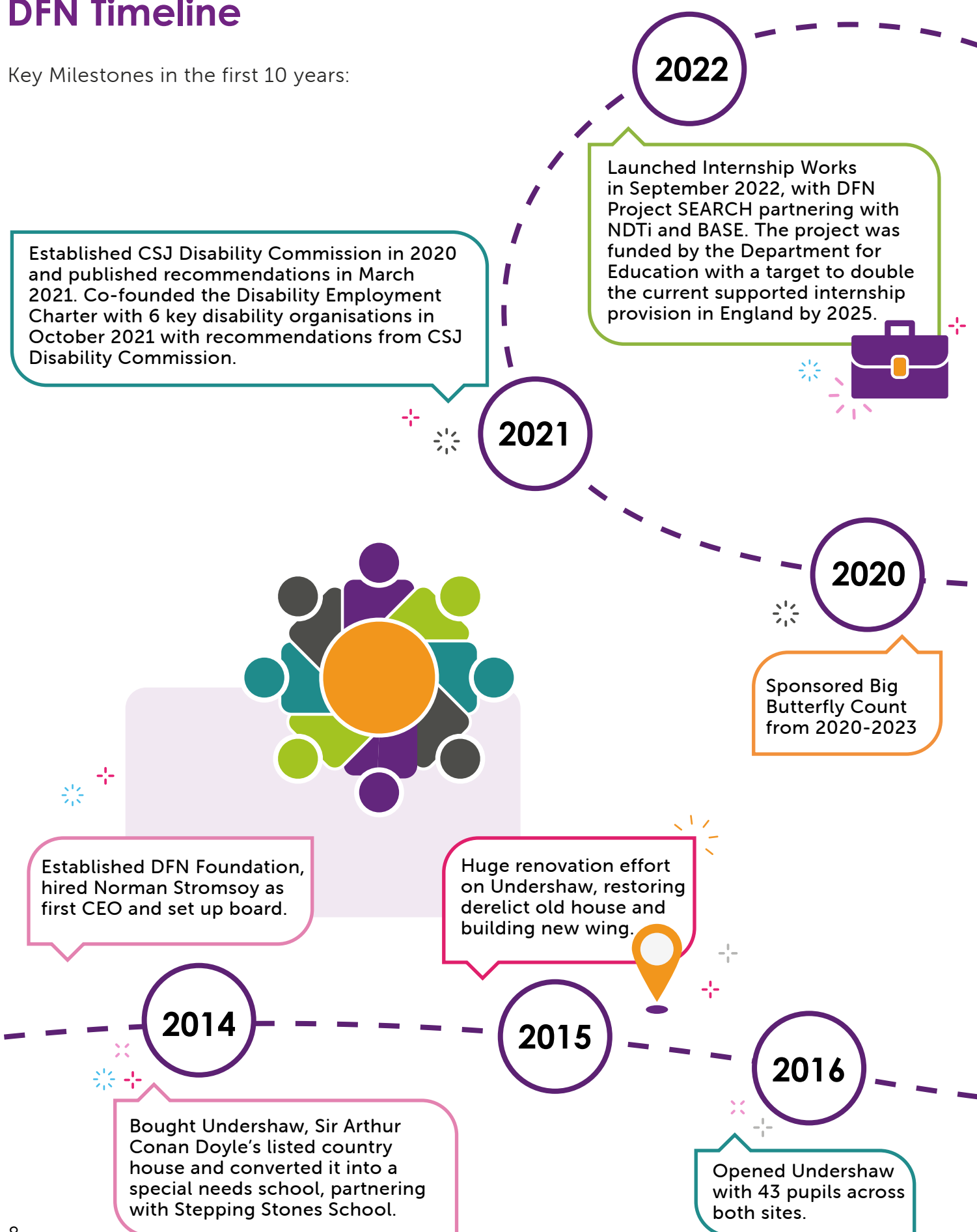
I am incredibly proud of everything we have achieved over the last 10 years and feel privileged to have worked alongside some of the best people in their sectors.

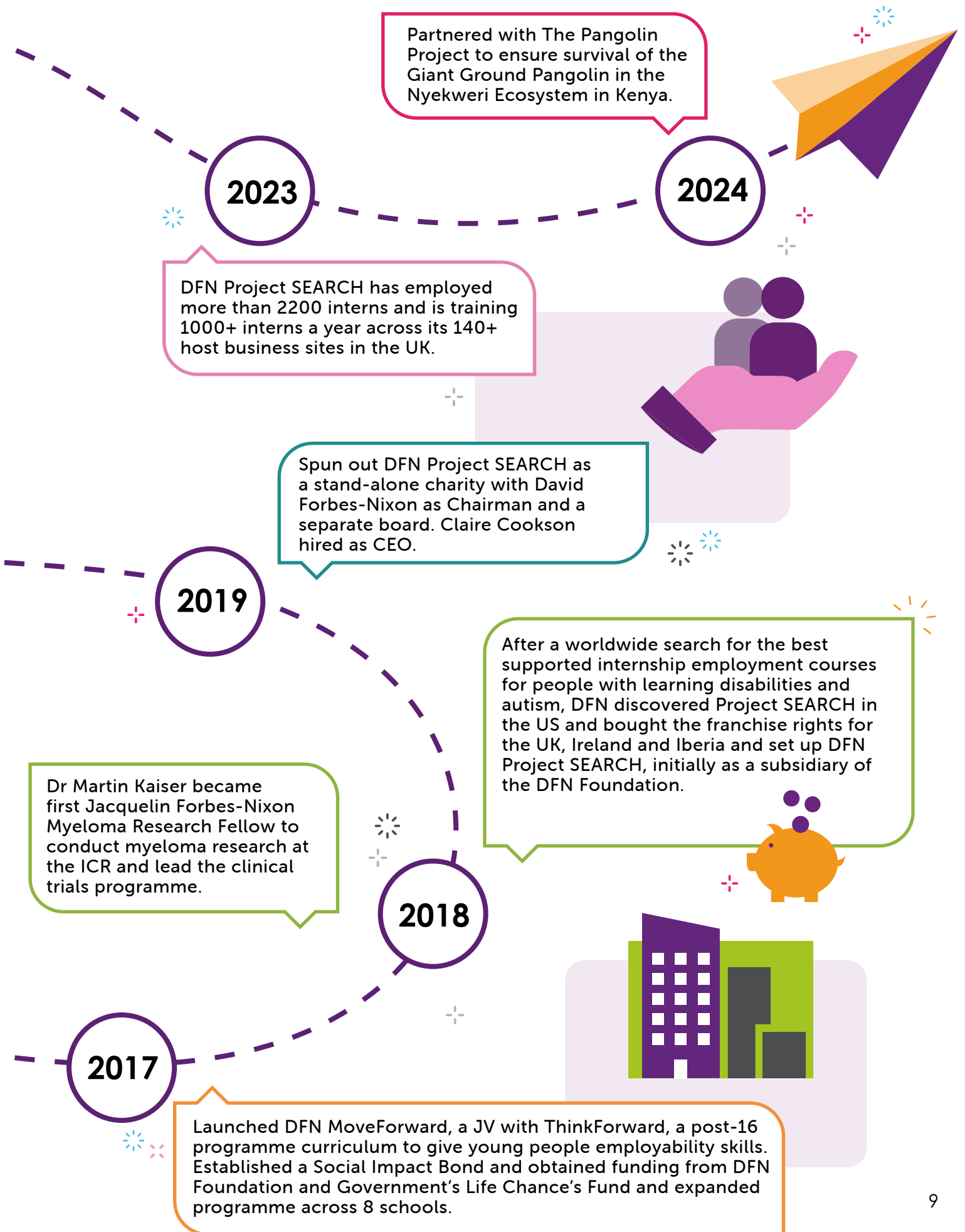
You will see in the following pages of this report more detail on how we have tried to make a difference by bringing together the best talent, operating with a business mindset and staying laser focused on the goals above.

David Forbes-Nixon

DFN Timeline

Key Milestones in the first 10 years:





The Board

Our Trustee Board



David Forbes-Nixon OBE

Founder and Chairman

David serves as Founder and Chairman of the David Forbes-Nixon Family Charitable Foundation ('DFN Foundation') which he set up in 2014 and DFN Project SEARCH in 2018. He has over 34 years' experience as an investment banker and fund manager and from 2002-2020 served as Co-Founder, Chairman and CEO of Alcentra, a leading sub-investment grade asset manager with over \$40bn AUM.

He bought Undershaw, Conan Doyle's old country house, in 2014 and converted it to an independent specialist school for children with learning disabilities and autism and obtained the Master Franchise Agreement for Project SEARCH for the UK, Ireland and Iberia in 2018.



Simon Konsta

With over 25 years of experience, Simon is a senior lawyer with extensive international leadership and management roles and experience. He has acted on a number of landmark disputes on behalf of financial institutions and global professional services firms.

In addition to his practice, Simon is International Business Development Lead Global London with DAC Beachcroft and is also a past Senior Partner of Clyde & Co, and chair of that firm's Management Board, working with regional boards in MEA, APAC, the Americas, and the UK and Europe. Simon serves as Vice Chair of DFN Foundation.



Eric Lowe OBE

Eric has worked in the life sciences and patient organisation landscape for nearly 30 years. Previously, Eric was CEO of Myeloma UK and Myeloma Patients Europe's founding president. Since 2017, Eric has been an independent healthcare consultant and has recently launched two new healthcare start-ups. Eric is on several advisory boards, working and steering groups, a frequent author on peer-reviewed publications, and a presenter at national and international meetings.



James Dickson

James worked as an investment manager in London between 1992 and 2013, managing European equities funds at LGT Management, Old Mutual and Meditor Capital Management. In 2014 he founded Piota, a company supplying a mobile app framework to help schools, NHS services, charities and others to communicate and engage more effectively with their people - DFN Project SEARCH's app being one example. In 2023 James sold Piota to a UK B2B software consolidator, and is now looking for his next career step.

James became a trustee of the DFN Foundation in 2014 and serves on the investment committee. He has previously been a trustee/ director at five schools/ academy chains.

Our Trustee Board (Continued)



Harry Forbes-Nixon

Harry has been on the DFN Foundation's board since 2023 and serves as Vice Chairman and Trustee. He graduated from Durham University in 2021 with a first class honours degree in economics, and currently works in the finance industry. He is FGASA qualified safari guide and helps lead the Foundation's conservation efforts.



Tom O'Beirne

Tom has 15+ years of experience in education and related sectors through roles with non-profit and commercial education organisations and in the classroom as a maths teacher. He currently works for Purposeful Ventures, a non-profit venture builder which works with social entrepreneurs and philanthropists to build and strengthen organisations that deliver systemic impact. Other recent experience has included leading on operations and finance for a digital assessment start up, and GM roles running various LATAM and Asian markets for an online English teaching business.

Our CEOs



Claire Cookson

Claire was CEO of the DFN Foundation and DFN Project SEARCH from 2019 to 2024. Claire is an experienced senior leader with an extensive background in education.

She brings a strong understanding of collaborating with businesses, educators and Local Authorities to develop employability outcomes for learners with special educational needs and disabilities.



Norman Stromsoy

Norman was CEO of the DFN Foundation from 2014 to 2019 and CEO of DFN Project SEARCH from 2018 to 2019. Norman is an experienced Board Trustee with a demonstrated history of working in the education management industry.

Skilled in strategic leadership, strategy, directorship, educational leadership, and private sector, Norman is a strong business development professional with a Masters degree focused in Educational Management MA from Northumbria University.

What We Do


Transforming Outcomes

The DFN Foundation is a commissioning charity committed to transforming life outcomes for people throughout the country.

With the DFN Foundation's support, our delivery partners are able to influence sustainable change in special needs education, supported employment, healthcare and conservation. Our partnership model is business led and outcome driven.


Our vision is to bring positive and lasting change, helping to unlock natural potential and build a more inclusive and environmentally conscious society.

Education




We continue to promote the development of best practice in special needs education to deliver great outcomes for young people with learning difficulties, disabilities and autism.

Employability




We are positively influencing current practice so that young people with special educational needs and disabilities receive high quality work-related learning and improved access to long-term paid employment.

Healthcare



We are committed to improving survival rates of Myeloma and advancing cures through the strategic funding of high-quality research which will benefit patients and improve survival rates.

Conservation



We are working to ensure the survival of the British Butterfly in the UK and the Giant Ground Pangolin in the Nyekweri Ecosystem in Kenya.

Our Four Key Priority Areas



■ Education



We continue to promote the development of best practice in special needs education to deliver great outcomes for young people with learning disabilities and autism.

Creating world-class special needs education at Undershaw

We have invested £7.5million in establishing an outstanding SEN school at Undershaw, which is providing world-class special needs facilities, supporting pupils to reach their full potential in life. We are the commissioner of one of the UK's largest Social Impact Bonds and, together with ThinkForward we have

created the DFN MoveForward programme. This is an innovative education-based employability skills strategy that supports students with special needs by providing individualised coaching, creating ready for work opportunities whilst promoting greater employer awareness and engagement.

DFN MoveForward

DFN MoveForward supports 15-24 years olds with a mild to moderate learning disability to make the successful transition from education to full-time paid employment.

The target population have a diagnosed (Education Health and Care Plan) learning disability in the primary special educational need categories of 'communication & interaction' and/or 'cognition & learning'.

The programme operates in four regions, across eight education partners in:
London, Kent, Surrey and The West Midlands.

Progression Coaches are supported by a Business Partnership Manager in each region who is responsible for brokering workplace opportunities with local businesses.

The programme ended in April 2024 after a successful five years where DFN MoveForward helped 84 adults successfully transition into an employment pathway. Specifically, 64 individuals secured full-time paid employment and 20 moved into part-time employment. Additionally, over the life of the programme, we facilitated 90 young adults in accessing supported internships.

Undershaw



The impact of the DFN Foundation on the character and substance of Undershaw is remarkable and one of which I am so proud. The people behind the DFN Foundation are expert voices that galvanise our leadership team, inspire our staff, and care for our students and their futures.



Emma West,
Headteacher, Undershaw

The DFN Foundation purchased the once-derelict Undershaw site in 2014 and worked with local planners, architects, and specialists to turn the site into an accessible, inspiring and leading facility for the education and wellbeing of all our SEND students.

Undershaw opened in 2016 and provides a very special learning environment for pupils to learn, grow and thrive and prepares them to be socially and economically engaged in the future. Students learn so much from their peers; from older and younger children sitting together on the School Council, to engaging with each other at break times and spending time on the picnic benches together eating lunch or enjoying friendly seated volleyball on the lawn.

To have the space and time to enjoy each other's company, friendship, and a sense of community, contributes to the strong culture of Undershaw.

Talented staff are on hand to help model sociability, help broker relationships, and support with peer-to-peer mentoring. Having a place to call home, a place where students feel safe and nurtured, a place where they can try new things and practise the school values of respect, kindness and resilience is a vital aspect of the provision and where the DFN Foundation has made a marked and lasting impact.





Our culture at Undershaw is a key differentiator. We nurture it through everything we do.

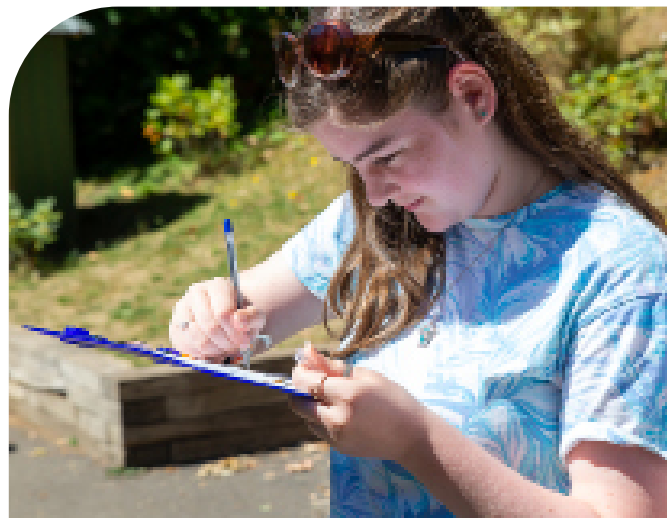
Undershaw

- **We Believe:** We believe young people with SEND should realise the aspirations they deserve as they grow into themselves, their futures and take up their places in the workplace and wider world.
- **We Unite:** School and home work in proactive partnerships centred around each child. As a school we also use our position to build partnerships to grow awareness of inclusivity of opportunity for those with SEND.
- **We Empower:** Specialist teams empower each child to grow in self-awareness, self-esteem, and independence as they engage with each other, their learning, and their community.
- **We Engage:** We celebrate individual growth and offer a flexible, multi-disciplinary curriculum model which is bespoke to each learner.
- **We Explore:** We offer a broad range of subjects and experiences which extend beyond the classroom and school gates in a flexible timetable that allows for depth of discovery and for each young person to learn in their own way and at their own pace.
- **We Inspire:** We work to provide the right opportunities for each learner to develop the skills they need to gain competitive, integrated employment. We provide a targeted programme of employability coaching and layered skills and workplace experiences throughout.
- **We Connect:** Bringing it all together.

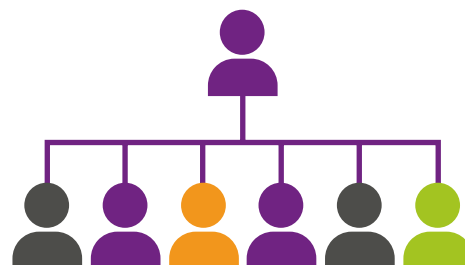
The Undershaw Governing Board

The purpose of the Governing Board is to support and challenge the Senior Leadership Team, consult on areas of shared expertise, and oversee the longer-term management and financial health of the school. The Undershaw Governing Board members are committed to the school's vision and passionate about its future.

The DFN Foundation, since it began its official involvement with the school during the refurbishment of Undershaw, has chaired and occupied several seats on the Governing Board and through this constant presence, has been involved actively with the school's strategic direction and aspirations for the future. The role of Governorship is to be a trusted and critical friend to the Senior Leadership Team and support, challenge and champion the school at every juncture.



The DFN Foundation Governors are a constant source of perspective, drive and passion, all of which resonate throughout the community.



Employability Curriculum at Undershaw

The DFN Foundation funded the innovative Progression Coach role in 2019 and thus created an Employability and Life Skills Faculty at Undershaw. The resultant Employability curriculum has been transformed over the past few years and is now setting the standard for life skills education across SEND education. Undershaw adopted the Skills Builder Framework in 2019 under the leadership of Leilah Sheridan (Progression Coach at that time).

Leilah has worked tirelessly to thread the principles of life skills throughout school life. These skills are not merely confined to classrooms or break time activities; they are in every space where students learn, be that through our taught or experiential activities. The Employability curriculum now includes initiatives such as targeted work experience, Industry Insight Talks, Careers Week activities, and a multitude of other pursuits.



Leilah Sheridan explains: "There is a depth and richness to our curriculum that this investment has bought to our school. We are now a Flagship setting for Skills Builder and through our work within the school and through our outreach and community connections, Undershaw is a beacon of what employability education should be. The DFN Foundation's support, through funding and its own vision and drive to improve employability outcomes for students with SEND, has been intrinsic to our success.

Essential skills unlock learning in the classroom, boosting academic outcomes, perseverance, and self-belief. They halve the likelihood of being out of work and increase earnings across a lifetime. They even boost wellbeing and life satisfaction. But access to these skills isn't fair. And where they are missed, it undermines social mobility, productivity, and wellbeing. We think everyone, at every stage of their lives, should have the opportunities to build them.



Leilah Sheridan,
Faculty Lead, Undershaw

The Skills Builder Partnership

In 2023 Undershaw was awarded the Skills Builder Flagship Award which celebrated their extensive work across both their internal and external network. This award is about more than teaching; it is about becoming visionaries for a Life Skills Programme, and advocating for the changes we know are possible for the benefit of all our young people. This places Undershaw at the forefront of the evolution.



Evelyn Haywood,
Director of Education, Skills Builder Partnership

"Now, every learner is provided with many opportunities to reflect, learn and apply their skills on a daily basis. To gain Flagship status, Undershaw has taken a truly whole school approach. Not only have they provided high quality opportunities for students to build their skills, but they have started to encourage staff to do the same through their 'skills spotters' initiative and recruitment processes.

We are proud to continue working with them in 2023-24 and learn from their great practice".

Support for Kailash Home in Kathmandu, Nepal

The support from the DFN Foundation helped provide purpose built on-site accommodation for the 130 children in the Kailash Home. This donation allowed the Himalayan Children's Foundation to refurbish the original buildings and create a stable living and learning environment for the children together with new buildings provide new dining and multipurpose hall, new kitchens, teaching and recreational spaces. Thanks to the generosity of the DFN Foundation and the hard work of our staff in Kathmandu, hundreds of children will pass through Kailash over the years and have the privilege to call it "home"!

The DFN Foundation committed to helping the children move from a life of illiteracy and deprivation towards happiness in themselves and value to others and their community. The new facilities improved access to education, health services and care, making a positive change to their lives resulting in better life opportunities, increased educational progress and well-being.

The new facilities are supporting youngsters develop the living skills necessary to pursue self-sustaining livelihoods, enhancing the quality of life for themselves and the communities in which they live.

The DFN Foundation helped Kailash staff set up horticulture, bicycle repair and bakery enterprise projects supported with design and IT elements to help develop students work related learning opportunities and develop enterprise skills. The funding support enabled Kailash home to purchase essential equipment to facilitate these projects, including set up of the bakery with supervision from a professional baker, the building of a horticulture shed, poly tunnels and new bike maintenance facilities created on site. This programme is an ongoing project to develop student enterprise and employability skills so that they can potentially take those skills back to their communities and are now fully self-funding. Kailash routinely bakes bread and buns for Monday and Saturday. The bread is tastier and healthier with no preservatives. Children have learnt to prepare cookies and birthday cakes and can also make pizzas and burgers for special events. All the bakery machines like oven, refrigerator, dough machine and other equipment are in regular use. Senior children prepare chocolate cookies for their college fair and sell the cookies within very short period of time.

The bakery classes have taught the children basic bakery skills on how to use oven, dough machine, flour measurement, yeast etc. which enable them to pave a way to build a career in baking industries.



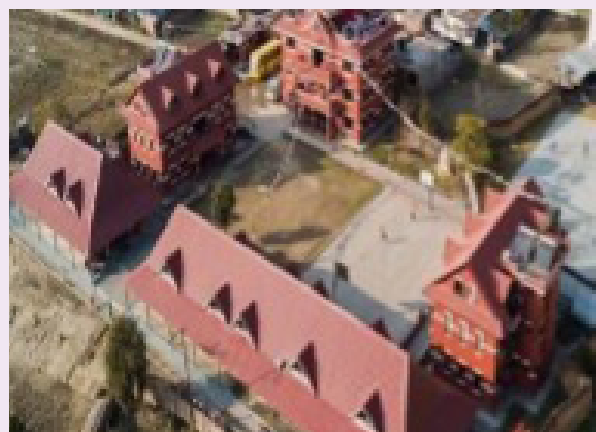
Kailash Hostel children happily tend a large vegetable garden adjacent to the Hostel on a leased parcel of land. The DFN Foundation emphasised the importance of teaching children life skills such as maintaining a garden, independently sustaining themselves off the land, and contributing to the nutritional, well balanced meals they eat. The garden keeps the children connected to important Nepalese farming skills maintained in their villages and gives them an opportunity for enjoyable fulfilling work. The children are growing seasonal vegetables like rice, barley, green vegetables, cauliflower, broccoli, coriander, tomatoes, green chilies, capsicum and garlic etc. These vegetables are regularly cared for by the children by watering, cleaning weeds, preparation of land and fertilization.

They have cultivated and successfully produced a large number of seasonal vegetables to feed children and sell organic vegetables in the farmer market, Kathmandu.

Kailash kids are very enthusiastic mountain bikers. The mountain bike/ cycling project at Kailash home has helped children learn how to repair bikes as well as to ride for fun and adventure. Small kids enjoy riding BMX bicycles.

During the school holidays, senior children prefer to ride new Giant Talon bicycles during weekends. Recently, 8 new mountain bikes were replaced for better comfort, safety and easy ride.

This programme has encouraged children to learn new repairing skills, enhance cycle riding skills with safety gears and develop curiosity and interest in mountain biking which is fast becoming a good business in Nepal with the growing numbers of youth and tourists interested in cycling in the hilly and the Himalayan regions of Nepal.



■ Employability



Employability

We are positively influencing current practice so that young people with special educational needs and disabilities receive high quality work-related learning and improved access to long-term paid employment.

We are supporting young adults with a learning disability and/or autism spectrum condition, to live more independent, happier and healthier lives.

A Game of Chance

DFN Project SEARCH addresses the social injustice that fewer than 5% of adults with a learning disability and, or autism spectrum condition are in paid employment compared to 80% of their peers. This impacts their life chances and whilst these adults are from all different walks of life there is a strong correlation between learning disability and social deprivation. They are more likely to be living in poverty and poor housing, to be socially isolated and die on average 15 – 20 years younger.

A key transition point for many of these adults is when they leave education and try to access the world of work. Currently they face a postcode lottery in terms of the quality and level of support that they will receive, with many young adults and their families lacking the information and opportunities to make informed decisions and positive choices.

For many young adults and their families, they describe it as falling off a cliff edge. There are over 141,000 young people aged 16 – 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan, meaning they have Special Educational Needs Disabilities that require specialist support.



The Project SEARCH Model

DFN Project SEARCH's founder, David Forbes-Nixon, identified an evidence-based transition to work model, Project SEARCH, that was developed in Cincinnati Children's Hospital in the USA in the 1990s as a possible solution to this transition challenge. This sector leading model sees 70% of participants secure employment and 60% secure full-time employment that is non-seasonal and in an integrated setting – way above the national average of 4.8%.

In 2018 The DFN Foundation secured a master franchise agreement for DFN Project SEARCH to replicate the model across the UK, Ireland and Iberia and established it as a separate charity in 2019.



1 million

People with a learning disability and/or autism who want to work.



4.8%

National average of adults with a learning disability and/or autism in full time employment.



70%

Success rate of getting a job after finishing the DFN Project SEARCH programme.



150+

Host business sites across the UK including Amazon, Marriott Hotels, Asda, PHS, Goldman Sachs, the Police Force, NHS hospitals and many more.



60%

Success rate in getting a full time job after finishing the DFN Project SEARCH programme.



2200

Interns supported into full-time paid employment

Supporting Transformational Change

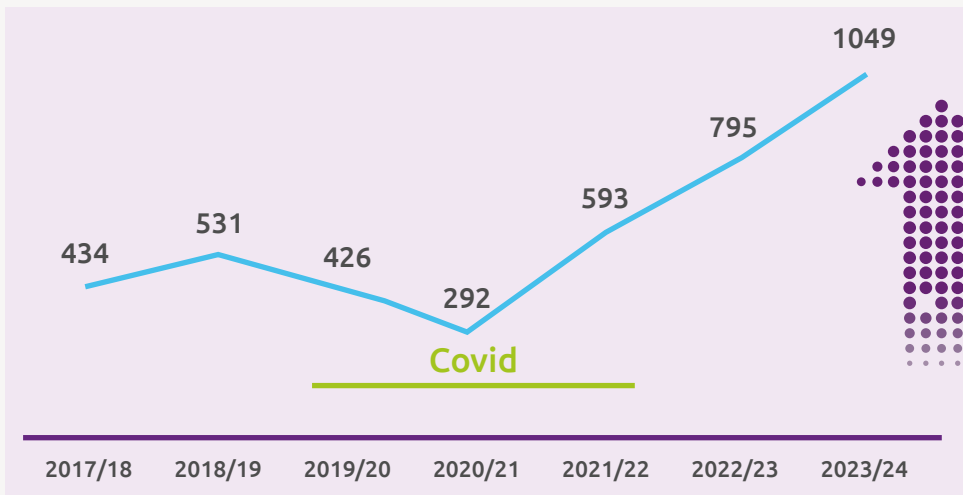
DFN Project SEARCH has seen transformational change since the DFN Foundation founded it in 2018 and registered it as a separate charity in 2019 and the DFN Foundation provided the initial seed funding to drive the programme forward.

With investment and forward pledges of around £4.5 million to date from the DFN Foundation, the charity has grown to over 150 programmes and 1,000 young people supported annually, with a focus on keeping the model fidelity of the programme to ensure it keeps delivering excellent employment results.

The support of the DFN Foundation has enabled DFN Project SEARCH to make a real step change in the world of supported internships, helping to underwrite its expansion and support a mission that is aiming for 500 sites and to have supported 14,000 young adults into work by 2030 and 20,000 by 2034.

Perhaps even more importantly, DFN Project SEARCH have not only grown in size but also in quality. Graduates of this programme are currently securing contracts of 6 hours more a week than when the DFN Foundation acquired the Project SEARCH licence.

There has also been a significant increase in the variety and quality of jobs graduates have secured. Since 2018, interns found employment in over 20 sectors, from aviation and IT, to education and healthcare, in roles such as X-Ray technician, salesperson, quality control specialist, assistant chef, and computer technician!



We aim to set clear and focused goals such as getting 20,000 disabled young adults into employment by 2034



DFN Project SEARCH now has the largest data set in the UK on the outcomes of a supported internship and are able to report on a wide range of criteria from hours worked to average salary and the industries that interns have found employment in.

Despite the pandemic we have continued to see increases across average hours worked from 24 to 27, average hourly wage, which has increased from £8.07 to £9.78, and the most recent data collected for the interns that graduated in summer 2022 showed that we'd got to pre pandemic levels with 68% securing employment and 60% securing that met key criteria of being full-time, non-seasonal and in an integrated setting.



DFN Project SEARCH has now invested in establishing a Youth Advisory Group with the appointment of a dedicated Head of Engagement and Advocacy to support their development and ensure user voice is reflected in our work. This is also enabling the expansion of the engagement programme to include ongoing career support for DFN Project SEARCH graduates and building stronger relationships with parents and carers to help with the recruitment of interns.

This work is also thanks to the support of a wide range of funders, from trusts and foundations, companies, NHS England, and the Department for Education but the seed funding that the DFN Foundation invested was instrumental in securing this additional support.

Influencing the Wider Supported Internship Sector

The growth that the DFN Foundation has enabled and the insight that DFN Project SEARCH have gained through more and better data analysis has strengthened our capacity building role and meant that we have been better placed to influence the sector as a whole.

This has included launching a Parliamentary Liaison Group which covers, inter alia, Supported Internships, feeding into the Public Service Committee Inquiry around the transition from education to employment for young disabled people and the government's Disability Action Plan, which now includes employment.

DFN Project SEARCH's work led to the creation of a Supported Internship Quality Assurance Framework and are now advocating for a kite mark to reflect the standards set out in the Framework.

The charity is now working with the Department for Education around exploring how to remove barriers regarding the need to have an EHCP to undertake a supported internship and the criteria for their allocation.

This also includes working with Ofsted to influence early education and the need to focus on employment as a pathway at this stage.

In 2023 DFN Project SEARCH launched the first ever National Supported Internship Day on the 27th of March 2023. The purpose of the day was to raise awareness of supported internships and what they are. Incredibly they reached 9.8m people across the UK via social media.

Over 3,000 users created content based on supported internship programmes across the UK, helping to give young adults with a learning disability and, or autism spectrum condition a voice.



Marriott Hotels Partnership

DFN Project SEARCH partnered with Marriott Hotels who take interns on from our programme into fulltime employment. Please scan the QR code to hear life-changing stories of our graduates, Brian Wallington and Michael Vickery who both work for the Marriott hotel.



DFN Project Search Case Study

Cameron Smith has a rewarding job at the Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities (SCLD). As a Development Worker, he engages with people with lived experience of a learning disability and their families, partner organisations across the world and policymakers in Scottish government. Cameron believes his rewarding career at SCLD would not have been possible if he hadn't taken part in a DFN Project SEARCH programme when he left school in 2013.

Cameron attended a mainstream school, where he was a vocal participant in the classroom but struggled when it came to socialising outside of lessons. He remembers "hiding away at lunch" with his close friends, partly because he was shy and "didn't really know what to say to folks" and partly because he often found himself the target of bullying.

Like many young people, Cameron thought college was his only option when he left school and worried he would find himself unemployed when he completed his studies. When an application form found its way onto the desk of his career advisor, Cameron was excited to find a programme where he could learn real life skills and more importantly, find employment.

Cameron's DFN Project SEARCH journey began at University Hospital Hairmyres. As part of the programme, Cameron undertook a variety of rotations including patient facing roles in the Audiology Department, desk based roles in the Orthopaedic Department and spending time as a hospital porter. Commenting on the depth of experience, Cameron said "I was coming home buzzing every day."

During his second rotation at DFN Project SEARCH, Cameron found he had been successful in his application to a part time (16 hours per week) receptionist job at SCLD. However, his journey did not stop there. After 2½ years, he progressed into a new role as an Events and Information Assistant. This time, he would be working five days a week in his first full time job ever.

This promotion enabled Cameron to play an even more active role in the planning of events, not just attending meetings, but helping to coordinate them.

He learned to write agendas and take minutes with clear action points, which was challenging at first due to his dyspraxia and dyslexia, but SCLD gave him all the time and tools he needed.

In 2021, Cameron was promoted again to the role of Development Worker. In this role, he facilitates National Networks and represents his organisation at cross party parliamentary committees, delivering presentations and learning disability awareness training at international events.

Cameron owns a three-bedroom house in East Kilbride, Scotland and is grateful to DFN Project SEARCH for helping him to get his first job which led to his current role.



"Without my job, I wouldn't be able to have my house or go on my first holiday." - Cameron

He is a passionate advocate for DFN Project SEARCH, speaking about the programme and the impact it had on his life, whenever he gets the chance, including at the World Down's Syndrome Congress in Glasgow, 2018.

www.dfnprojectsearch.org



■ Healthcare



Healthcare

We are committed to improving survival rates of Myeloma and advancing cures through the strategic funding of high-quality research which will benefit patients and improve survival rates. DFN Foundation Supported Myeloma Research Programme Improving Survival in Myeloma Patients with High-Risk Disease.



Dr Martin Kaiser

Jacquelin Forbes-Nixon Research Fellowship at the ICR

Dr Martin Kaiser became the first JFN Research fellow at the ICR and the DFN Foundation funded his work as chief investigator of the optimum (MUKnine trial) and his teams research on the molecular structure of high risk myeloma. Accounting for between 20% and 25% of all patients at diagnosis, high-risk myeloma has for too long been in the too-hard-to-fix box. However, this is no longer the case.

Thanks to the generous support of the DFN Foundation, myeloma experts at the Institute of Cancer Research have been able to better understand and define better high-risk myeloma through some very smart science and subsequently develop a first-in-the-world treatment approach to improve survival and quality of life in this group of patients.



What we have accomplished

- Dr Martin Kaiser became the first JFN research fellow and the DFN foundation funded his work as chief investigator of the OPTIMUM (MUKnine trial) and his teams research on the molecular structure of high risk myeloma.
- OPTIMUM was independently designed and set up. In addition to the support from the Foundation, Myeloma UK secured support of £3M from 2 pharmaceutical companies and leveraged research treatment and support costs in 39 participating UK hospitals (estimated >£10M).
- The OPTIMUM (MUKnine) clinical trial pioneered an innovative research design that included a synthetic treatment control arm using a large historical dataset ('Big Data') involving thousands of myeloma patients treated in trials in the UK over the last 2 decades. This novel approach ensured maximum value for patients by avoiding unethical treatment randomisation.
- By spearheading innovative molecular diagnostic strategies across a wide geographic recruitment area, the correlative scientific research has improved the understanding of high-risk myeloma in myeloma clinics across the UK and internationally. It has raised awareness of the need for better diagnostics to identify patient sub-groups with the highest unmet need for better treatments.
- Results were accepted as oral presentations and presented at the most prestigious meetings for blood cancer research: the ASCO 2021, ASH 2021, and ASH 2022 and 2023 meetings. The ASH 2022 presentation was also elected a 'Best of ASH' and shown in a meeting series with the same title across the USA, amplifying the message and raising global awareness for the results.
- OPTIMUM results have been published in the highly prestigious Journal of Clinical Oncology (JCO). Apart from its global academic reach, articles on clinical trial results published in JCO can be cited when applying to private healthcare insurers for an individual patient's diagnostics or treatment.
- The strength of the results and their increase in weight through successful publication in JCO are also building a solid basis for ongoing discussions with NICE and the NHS about broader access to the new diagnostic and treatment approach taken in OPTIMUM for myeloma patients on the NHS and potentially elsewhere.
- Ongoing genetic analyses also provided novel insights into sub-groups of patients that benefit particularly from current standard-of-care maintenance treatment approaches and diagnostic definition of those with high-risk disease behaviour who urgently need improved approaches.
- Based on the success of the myeloma research programme at the ICR, Martin Kaiser was awarded the title of Reader in Molecular Haematology at the ICR. The ICR remains the top cancer institution in Europe and in the top 3 globally. This achievement is directly attributable to the DFN Foundation's funding of the myeloma research programme at the ICR, under the Jacquelin Forbes-Nixon Research Fellowship.

Research into high-risk myeloma/OPTIMUM trial (supported by the JFN Fellowship)

Continued analysis of OPTIMUM trial and publication of results:

- Treatment, response and relapse of over 400 patients from 39 hospitals across the UK continue to be collected and quality controlled on a regular, ongoing basis, specifically as patients are doing far better and remain in remission with the novel therapeutic approach taken in OPTIMUM.
- Biological material continues to be longitudinally collected on an ongoing basis at key time points for over 100 patients, and bone marrow immune profiles are generated before and throughout treatment for high-risk disease.
- Patient-reported outcomes (PROs) continue to be collected for over 100 high-risk patients across 39 UK hospitals via Quality-of-Life questionnaires on an ongoing basis at pre-defined time points.
- Long-term follow-up is ongoing to allow for more in-depth translational research and investigate the scale of the overall survival benefit of the new treatment over the standard of care.
- Multiple upcoming analyses are underway and in planning. The most imminent analysis will focus on the group of patients that still relapsed early despite optimised therapy in OPTIMUM, as this could help identify patients who are candidates for entirely novel, experimental treatment approaches.
- In parallel, a quality of life (QoL) and PRO analysis is underway to identify the frequency and severity of impact on QoL by diagnostics or treatment.



Ongoing state-of-the-art genomic analyses

Continued analysis of OPTIMUM trial and publication of results:

- Integrated translational analyses are ongoing, including data generated by the research network, including the ICR, Birmingham University, and Leeds University, genome, minimal residual disease, immune profiling and patient-reported outcome analyses, generating a comprehensive dataset characterising high-risk myeloma.
- These analyses form the basis for mapping synergistic international collaborations to improve patient outcomes with high-risk myeloma.
- We have recently expanded our work using next-generation long-range genome sequencing, which will now be applied to a larger group of patients.
- We have an ongoing publication strategy, in parallel with working with the NHS and NICE regarding the routine commissioning of the OPTIMUM treatment combination.



■ Conservation



Conservation

We are working to ensure the survival of the British Butterfly, with the long-term goal of focusing efforts on the re-introduction of some of the rarer species of British Butterfly. We are also in partnership with The Pangolin Project to enact positive change, with all 8 species of Pangolin being threatened with extinction due to threats of poaching and habitat loss.

Butterfly Conservation

Butterfly Conservation is the UK charity dedicated to saving butterflies, moths and our environment. Our research provides advice on how to conserve and restore habitats. We run projects to protect more than 100 threatened species and we are involved in conserving hundreds of sites and reserves.

www.butterfly-conservation.org

DFN Foundation has sponsored the Big Butterfly Count between 2021-2024. It is an annual UK-wide survey run by Butterfly Conservation to help assess the health of our environment simply by counting and reporting the amount and type of butterflies and some day-flying moths seen in 15 minutes in gardens, parks or any green space.

This has rapidly become the world's biggest survey of butterflies. Over 94,000 citizen scientists took part in the 2023 count, submitting 136,719 sightings of butterflies and day-flying moths from across the UK.

The Big Butterfly Count is free, fun and takes just 15 minutes. It is open to anyone, of any age, in any part of the UK - towns, cities or the countryside. The campaign is about the joy of counting butterflies – having fun, connecting with nature, while also contributing to important scientific data collection.



It is significant that 75% of the counts are completed in individual gardens, as most other butterfly research and data are collected in reserves and natural landscapes, so the big butterfly count provides a wider view of the national picture.

The support of the DFN Foundation has enabled this long-standing citizen science programme to engage nearly 100,000 people each year with butterflies and the natural world, and using the data collected to conduct scientific research. Raising awareness of the need to secure butterfly habitat.

Counting butterflies can be described as taking the pulse of nature and we depend on members of the public, our citizen scientists, to help us assess how much help nature needs.

The data from the big butterfly count helps us to identify important species trends. The big butterfly count data significantly assists in planning how to protect butterflies from extinction, as well as understanding the effect of climate change on wildlife.

Participation in the Big Butterfly Count has grown since the DFN Foundation first began supporting, with 40%+ increases in the number of individuals and counts recorded from 2022 to 2023.

The Big Butterfly Count data also feed into Butterfly Conservation's overarching distribution recording scheme, and contributes to a wide range of scientific research and reports including the Butterflies for the new Millennium.

These data sets are mapped to show species distributions and are used to calculate distribution trends so we can understand if species are expanding or contracting their distributions.



Thank you from Butterfly Conservation's Chief Executive Office Julie Williams:



"With increasingly extreme weather, it's more important than ever to build a year-on year picture to examine how butterflies and their ecosystems are faring in the face of climate change. By finding out what is happening, we can be part of finding solutions. If people see and feel part of nature they will care about it. We must engage and inspire as many people as possible to fight for nature to ensure that many generations to come can still enjoy it. On behalf of everyone at Butterfly Conservation I would like to thank DFN Foundation for their many years of support; we are so proud of what we've achieved together through this transformational partnership".

Impact and Reach: Key Stats

- The total number of butterflies counted during the official 3 week period of the Big Butterfly Count (BBC) from 2010 - 2023 is now over 11 million! (11,187,299)
- Social media reach during the campaign is 5 million users each year.
- Famous faces who have taken part or supported the Big Butterfly Count (BBC) over the last few years include His Majesty King Charles III, Her Royal Highness Princess Charlotte, Butterfly Conservation Vice President Chris Packham and even Winnie the Pooh!

BBC Results 2023

Big Butterfly Count 2023 took place from 14 July – 6 August (with sightings submitted from 1 July to 31 August 2023). (2022 numbers)

- Total number of BBC participants = 94,229 (64,760)
- Total number of BBC counts undertaken = 136,719 (96,257)
- Total number of BBC participants (unique email addresses) = 49,725 (33,449)



Big Butterfly Count 2023 UK		Abundance	Average per count	% change from 2022	13 year trend
1	Red Admiral	248,077	1.96	338	78%
2	Gatekeeper	222,896	1.77	12	-28%
3	Large White	216,666	1.72	11	27%
4	Small White	202,029	1.60	15	2%
5	Meadow Brown	162,396	1.29	6	-17%
6	Peacock	149,179	1.18	172	-7%
7	Comma	49,173	0.39	26	5%
8	Small Tortoiseshell	45,364	0.36	11	-30%
9	Holly Blue	34,655	0.27	68	41%
10	Common Blue	30,009	0.24	-13	-44%
11	Speckled Wood	29,708	0.24	-11	-38%
12	Green-veined White	24,093	0.19	0	-61%
13	Ringlet	23,048	0.18	-37	-41%
14	Small Copper	19,367	0.15	11	66%
15	Brimstone	17,694	0.14	73	-10%
16	Painted Lady	11,893	0.09	3	113%
17	Six-spot Burnet	9,271	0.07	-23	-
18	Marbled White	8,611	0.07	12	-3%
19	Silver Y	5,650	0.04	171	-
20	Jersey Tiger	4,748	0.04	5	-
21	Scotch Argus	1,234	0.01	-11	-

The Pangolin Project



All 8 species of Pangolin are threatened with extinction due to threats of poaching and the international trade of pangolin scales and meat, and habitat loss. The Giant Ground Pangolin is generally considered to be at greatest risk of extinction as it inhabits Congo-Guinea forest mosaic habitats that are highly vulnerable to deforestation. They grow to up to 2m in length and can be up to 49Kg in weight. Their size and the corresponding size of their scales make them particularly vulnerable to poaching. Giant Pangolin are an incredibly gentle giant. Their scaly armour makes them seem an ethereal and otherworldly beast particularly as they are seen only at night and move surprisingly quickly and quietly and are seen in forests. They are shy, nocturnal animals dependent only on ants and termites for food and therefore pose no threat to either human life or livelihood. Whilst they are predominantly solitary, The Pangolin Project has seen extraordinary social behaviour between individuals and we have much to learn about them. Pangolin are an indicator species and their presence is indicative of a healthy forest ecosystem that usually supports a plethora of other species.



THE PANGOLIN PROJECT



The Nyekweri Ecosystem is the eastern most remnant of Congo-Guinea forest. It is found on the very edge of the western side of the Greater Mara Ecosystem like a coral reef extending into the savannah ocean. There are a number of unique flora and fauna species within the area found nowhere else in the Mara and it is the only area in Kenya with a known population of the Giant Ground Pangolin.

The Pangolin Project has been working within the area since 2022. Within this time a team of 13 individuals have monitored the population of Giant Ground Pangolin in the area using tracking devices and camera traps and worked with the community living in the area. In 2023, 22 live sightings were reported by the community to TPP and a rapid response team visited each one.

6 Giant Ground Pangolin were tagged using VHF and satellite tags and 65 camera traps were used to monitor Giant Ground Pangolin and to carry out camera trap surveys in remaining forest pockets in the area.

In addition to this work we have evaluated the impact of risks to the population:

The primary cause of mortality of Giant Ground Pangolin (GGP) and threat to their survival is electric fencing. The Nyekweri Ecosystem has undergone subdivision and land parcels of between 30 and 300 acres have been allocated to individual land owners. Once allocated, landowners often fence all or part of their land parcels for security purposes, to keep livestock in and prevent wildlife from entering their property and destroying crops (porcupine) or harming people (elephants). Where possible landowners use electric fences and wires 15cm apart. TPP has monitored GGP individuals traversing areas of over 5km² where the land now belongs to up to 52 land owners and many of which use electric fences. Pangolin continue to move regardless of the fences to find food. If they pass through wire with electric they are electrocuted. The shocks are not meant to kill but to deter but for the pangolin they are a death sentence as their primary defence mechanism is to stop and curl into a ball on the fence where they are repeatedly electrocuted.

From 2022 – 2023 The Pangolin Project rapid response team responded to 10 deaths on electric fencing and released 2 casualties that were still alive. In addition, 3 sets of scales were recovered under electric fences suggesting that the Pangolin had died there. The population of the GGP is now estimated to be just 30 individuals.

Deforestation and habitat loss is the second greatest threat to GGP and is the greatest existential threat to biodiversity in the area and globally: Once fenced, land owners clear forest to make space for grazing or to lease the land for agriculture from which they are dependent for income.

Charcoal traders and logging brokers have accelerated the rate of deforestation and clear forest regardless of species or status. Deforestation and change in land use reduces shelter and space for many creatures and reduces the availability of biomatter and food (ants and termites).

By June 2023 just a few blocks of intact forest greater than 200 acres remained in Nyekweri and the area was being increasingly fragmented by agriculture. Radical action was needed and our choice was either to catalyse change and lead the way to protect the forest and save the pangolin or watch the population become extinct.



The tide is turning

Since January 2024, the DFN Foundation has supported The Pangolin Project to be the change.

David and Harry Forbes-Nixon visited TPP in the Nyekweri Ecosystem in February 2024 where they surveyed the target area of 5000HA across 2 community conservancies. Land within this area is owned by 180 landowners and an estimated 2500HA of forest has been lost since 2018.

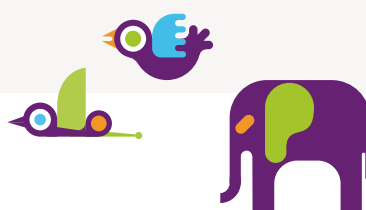
Our immediate priority has been to halt deforestation as rapidly as possible and to then engage partners in a long term solution.

TPP's approach has been simple: to offer financial incentives to landowners to keep the forest. Landowners enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with The Pangolin Project and the community conservancy and receive a conditional payment for the forest on their land if they meet the following terms:

- 1** They do not cut any trees on their land
- 2** They do not fence their forest
- 3** They allow TPP to monitor their land.

Whilst simple, the process requires continuous engagement with groups and individual landowners and there is a dedicated team of 5 individuals working across the landscape to do just this.

Since December 2023, 80 landowners have entered into the agreement and 1050 Hectares of forest is now protected. By May 2024 we plan to have 1400 Hectares of forest in the MoU. TPP's team has monitored these forest blocks and at least 4 Giant ground Pangolin continue to use them as well as up to 33 mammal species including elephant, waterbuck, eland, impala, leopard, and a host of bird species.





In this time period, TPP has carried out daily foot patrols and walked 1553km recording wildlife sightings. In addition, TPP has recorded and monitored forest destruction. In November and December 2023 TPP worked with landowners to remove electric fencing. 30% of landowners agreed to this activity and working with fence technicians we removed electricity from 70Km of fencing and reduced the incidence of Pangolin deaths.

These actions have been critical to ensure that no further deforestation occurs in the next 12 months but the impact of this initial 6 months has been far greater than saving the forest: It has generated engagement and buy in from landowners and for them to see that conservation can provide a viable financial alternative for the forest on their land if left intact.

The process has involved numerous stakeholder engagement meetings and created trust and partnership between The Pangolin Project, landowners and the conservancies that will be the foundation for future work. Lastly it has helped TPP to identify the barriers that they must overcome to ensure the long term conservation and restoration of the area. TPP are now developing a detailed strategic plan for the area. This first step to conservation of the area is essential and has only been possible with the support of the DFN Foundation.

The next stage is clear – to secure 5000 Hectares for conservation and forest restoration and ensure a viable and thriving habitat for wildlife and improve the livelihoods of those living alongside wildlife.

In the coming months TPP will be working with 3 main partners – Kimintet and Olorien Community conservancy and Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association – as well as working with all demographics of society in the area to build conservation agreements, develop management plans and also to look at the development needs of the area. Conservation is the vehicle for these services and the development of the area.

Engagement with all parties is critical and whilst this process is ongoing we continue to monitor the Giant Ground Pangolin population and also mitigate the risks to their survival.

In the last one month, 2 new individuals have been identified – a male and female – providing us with hope and incentive that our actions will create lasting change and security for the Giant Ground Pangolin and other species in the area.

In the long term, TPP hope to remove all fences in the area as conservation replaces agriculture as an income source, but in the mean time we will be replacing remaining electric fences below 65 cm with pangolin safe fencing to ensure there are no further deaths.



The situation is critical but the tide is turning in the area with consistent community engagement and developing lasting partnerships and a common vision and goal. A lot has been lost but so much remains and the resilience of nature has shown that when left alone and without pressure it is possible to recover and establish thriving habitats that can support those that live alongside it.

www.thepangolinproject.org



Influencing Policy

We are now creating a growing movement as we seek to influence policy and fund developments in education, employability, healthcare and conservation.



Driving Positive Change with the Centre for Social Justice

The DFN Foundation has commissioned pioneering research with the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ). The CSJ was established as an independent think-tank in 2004 to put social justice at the heart of British politics and make policy recommendations to tackle the root causes of poverty.

The paper Rethink Disability at Work explored barriers for individuals with learning disabilities and developing a more progressive approach to employability training for young people with learning difficulties, disabilities and autism.

The DFN Foundation sponsored the Centre for Social Justice Disability Commission in 2021 with Lord Kevin Shinkwin as Chair and David Forbes-Nixon as Vice Chair.



See download links to the Reports we have commissioned and collaborated on with the CSJ.



Download 2017 CSJ report

<https://bit.ly/30dh10B>



Download 2020 CSJ report

<https://bit.ly/3dJN7on>



Disability Commission 2021

<https://bit.ly/3apwqiB>

CSJ Disability Commission

It is 29 years since the Government's Disability Discrimination Act (DDAL) which outlawed unjustifiable disability discrimination and 14 years since the Equality Act which superseded it, became law.

However, according to polling by Savanta ComRes, only half of UK adults think that non-disabled people's attitudes to disabled people have got better in that time.

There is an under-representation of disabled people in all walks of life from business, the arts, politics and, most of all in senior management positions.



While 1 in 5 (22%) UK adults fit the legal definition of disability, just 1 in 8 (12%) say they consider themselves to be disabled.

This discrepancy could reflect the stigma of disability which remains all too real for some.



"This is why I chaired a commission on disability with the CSJ with David Forbes-Nixon as my Vice-Chair. We were supported by high profile commissioners including major business leaders from Deloitte, EY and Clifford Chance, a former Minister for disability and Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, one of our greatest Paralympians and tireless campaigners on disability issues. The government needs to find confidence to look beyond litany of strategies which litter the last 26 years and instead formulate and implement an action plan for tangible, measurable progress. We also looked beyond the structures of government towards business and employers which is why we collaborated with business leaders to support our work. Being able to make progress with the disability employment field depends so much on also being able to show business what actually works. We looked at successful initiatives such as DFN Project SEARCH which has a success rate of over 60% in getting disabled people into real jobs compared to 5% for government backed schemes. That's more than a ten-fold difference to people's lives"

Lord Shinkwin,

Member of House of Lords

The Disability Commission was set up to secure a step change in the opportunities available to disabled people, especially in employment. Our policy recommendations form the basis of the 9 employment recommendations in the Disability Employment Charter that was set up after the Commission as well as informing some of the recommendations of an IoD Commission, chaired by Lord Shinkwin and on which David Forbes-Nixon sits.

We also successfully lobbied the Department for Education to commit to ensuring more young people with EHC Plans are offered a fully funded supported internship (another policy recommendation from the Commission report) which led to £18m additional funding for the Internships Work programme which was mandated to double the number of supported internships in England from 2250 to 4500 per year by March 2025.

“

‘What this shows is that DFN Project SEARCH punches above its weight in both its policy reach and impact. I am immensely grateful for its support and in awe of its visionary and rigorously evidence-based work. I am excited to see what the next 10 years bring!’

Lord Shinkwin



DFN Foundation and the Disability Employment Charter

In 2021, the DFN Foundation, alongside Disability Rights UK, Disability@Work, Leonard Cheshire, Scope, the Shaw Trust Foundation, UNISON, and the University of Warwick, founded the Disability Employment Charter ('the Charter').

The Charter calls on the government to implement proposals aimed at addressing disability employment disadvantage in nine key areas including: mandatory disability employment and pay gap reporting; reform of Access to Work and Disability Confident; leveraging of government procurement; and enhanced access to reasonable adjustments.

The Charter has now been signed by 175 organisations.

Including all the UK's largest disability charities (Mind, National Autistic Society, Mencap, Sense, RNIB, RNID, for example), large corporates (including McDonalds, Herbert Smith Freehills, PageGroup, Schroders, Publicis Groupe, the Clear Company, CMS Law), and other leading organisations including the Trades Union Congress, the British Medical Association, the Runnymede Trust and the British Paralympic Association.

This support for the Charter is already proving transformative. Former Disability Minister Chloe Smith MP described the Charter as a welcome initiative in a speech in the Commons in 2021. At a UNISON event in Parliament in December 2023, Shadow Minister for Disabled People Vicky Foxcroft MP stated that a Labour government would implement several of the Charter's proposals including mandatory disability employment and pay gap reporting, reform of Access to Work, and statutory rights to time off for union equality representatives to perform their role.

The DFN Foundation also leveraged the Charter to help secure £3 million funding to pilot the extension of supported internships to young people without an Education, Health and Care plan in the 2023 Spring Budget.

To find out more about the Charter, please scan the QR code below:



The Future of the DFN Foundation

The DFN Foundation board has set some ambitious goals for the next 10 years, building on the same themes from the first decade as follows:

Education

Support Undershaw to become a world class special needs school rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted with employability embedded in the curriculum.



Employment

Commit additional financial support to DFN Project SEARCH to help get 20,000 young disabled people into jobs through DFN Project SEARCH by 2034.



Healthcare

Support securing a route to market for OPTIMUM (MUKnine) clinical trials so as many Myeloma patients as possible can benefit from this pioneering set of drug therapies and share results globally through publications and presentations by Dr Kaiser.



Wildlife Conservation

Partner with The Pangolin Project to ensure survival of the Giant Ground Pangolin in the Nyekweri Ecosystem in Kenya.



Policy work

Launch DFN Scholars programme; continue work with Disability Employment Charter, Centre of Social Justice and consider setting up a Parliamentary Liason Group to leverage our initiatives with policymakers in Parliament



Thank you to all the partners and people on the journey so far



I am immensely proud of everything we have achieved so far and am incredibly grateful to our brilliant team led by our two extraordinary CEOs during that period, firstly Norman Stromsoy (2014-2019) and then Claire Cookson (2019-2024). We have been ably supported by our strong and diverse boards at the DFN Foundation, DFN Project SEARCH and Undershaw Education Trust to serve as critical friends on that journey.

I have been lucky in life and believe that with privilege comes responsibility to give back to society and to see that those resources are put to work in the best possible way to help those most in need.

I feel the DFN Foundation is perfectly positioned to lead the change and be a force for good in our 4 chosen priority areas and I am very thankful of my family's support, with Harry sitting on the DFN Foundation board and Charlie working at DFN Project SEARCH and my wife Clare and George offering generous support from behind the scenes. I would also like to thank all our partners for their inspirational work and their continued determination to support those who need it most.

A special thanks goes out to our committed trustees, partners, stakeholders and funders, without whom none of this would be possible."

David Forbes-Nixon



Thank you to our partners:



Contact us

David Forbes-Nixon OBE

Office Location

8-10 Grosvenor Gardens
London SW1W 0DH

Email

info@dfnfoundation.org