



## **The Milking Parlour: Bringing the cows home to Bristol City Centre**

Commissioned by environmental arts organization, *Cape Farewell*, **The Milking Parlour** is bringing two pure-bred Guernsey show cows to Bristol City Centre from the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> April 2016. Curated by political ecologist and artist, **Nessie Reid**, this provocative and engaging show will explore the values we hold towards our food and our relationships to the people that produce it.

In order to explore these themes, Nessie is focusing on the UK dairy industry through the medium of **milk**, a natural product once hailed as a superfood providing 34% of our RDA of protein and now undervalued - often cheaper to buy than bottled water. She will live with two cows for five days, four nights, in a temporary 'Milking Parlour' constructed in the heart of Bristol's Anchor Square just outside At-Bristol Science Centre. Free and open to all, this installation will have three milking demonstrations each day – breakfast, lunch and tea-time – accompanied by talks from farmers and experts from across the South West. Designed to inspire lively debate and discussion, **The Milking Parlour** seeks to explore themes around the true cost of farming, environmental sustainability, climate change, the future of our dairy industry, global food system inequalities, and much more!

Throughout the duration of the show – day and night – Nessie will live with the cows: she will milk them, feed them, muck them out and sleep with them. The purpose of this 'live-in' is to demonstrate the arduous and challenging processes involved in the production of a very normal, everyday product like milk; something we rarely think twice about as we pick a red, green or blue top from the supermarket shelf. During the calving and lambing season it is not uncommon for a farmer to construct a temporary bed within an animal's pen. The purpose of taking these cows out of their usual rural context into an urban environment is to highlight the major disconnect that now exists between the cities we live in and the production processes that give us the food we eat. This show seeks to engage a new generation to question what and how we consume – and how it impacts on all of our futures.

Since November 2014 Nessie has learnt how to milk cows and has been in residence at a number of dairy farms across the South West of England. Much of her research for **The Milking Parlour** – part of *Cape Farewell's Rural Artist Residency Programme* - has been recorded and can be followed on her website [www.themilkingparlour.org](http://www.themilkingparlour.org)

21-25 April 2016

At-Bristol Science Centre, Anchor Square, Bristol, BS1 5DB

Follow us at: @milkparlour #TMPBristol

[www.capefarewell.com](http://www.capefarewell.com)

### **Notes to Editors:**

#### **Context: UK Dairy Industry**

In 1950 there were approximately 196,000 dairy farms in the UK. By 2001 the number had dropped to 26,500 and in 2011 it had collapsed to 14,700. This means that over the past 60 years

92.5 per cent of our dairy farms have disappeared. Increasingly, many of the next generation is turning its back on dairy farming because they simply cannot make ends meet, with prospects looking fairly bleak. In the UK alone, approximately 18–20 million tonnes of food is wasted annually costing an estimated £22 billion a year and yet many farmers in the UK can barely scratch a living. More and more the next generation are turning away from farming as the prospects are so bleak. In December 2014 sixty small dairy farms shut down because the market price for their products was less than their production costs. Having attended *The Oxford Real Farming Conference* and hearing stories of dairy farmers in the UK who have been crippled by the increasing economic pressures placed upon them, Nessie decided this residency would focus specifically on milk. In the UK, how is it that milk - once hailed as a superfood, providing 34 % of our RDA of protein - can be cheaper to buy than bottled water?

### **About Nessie Reid**

Nessie Reid is a political ecologist focusing on food sovereignty, food waste and agriculture in the South West of England. She believes there is a need for radical and systemic change within our current food and farming system – a system which is becoming increasingly unhealthy and unsustainable for both Planet Earth and its inhabitants. Based in Bristol, Nessie is Co-Director of *This is Rubbish*, a CIC, aimed at exposing the (preventable) scale of food wasted in the UK via policy research, community and arts-led public events. She is co-coordinating *Stop The Rot*: a pilot campaign to engage one major grocery company and four MPs in committing to piloting and advocating a one-year food waste audit. She is part of the core team for *Beacon Farms*, a community benefit society training a new generation of sustainable food producers on Bristol's fertile "blue finger" land. Her interest in the link between agriculture, ecocide and climate change developed during field research for the *ICCA Consortium* in India, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Over a period of three years she witnessed the catastrophic ecological damage caused by large scale intensively aggressive agriculture practices, principally in the palm oil industry. Nessie is also Managing Editor for *Biodiversity – a Journal of Life on Earth*: a quarterly scientific publication from *Biodiversity Conservancy International*. Nessie is a graduate from London University's *School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)*.

### **About Cape Farewell**

*Cape Farewell* is an international environmental arts organisation that works to create an urgent cultural response to climate change. Launched in 2001 with a series of groundbreaking artist and scientist-manned expeditions to the Arctic, Cape Farewell has become an international not-for-profit programme that has supported over 300 artists creating new work, exhibitions, events, performances, talks, books and films, amongst much else. In autumn 2015 we launched a global festival ArtCop21 in the lead up to the UN Paris Summit – totaling 551 events in 54 countries.

Since 2014 a series of Artists have been invited to engage diverse, wide-reaching audiences with rural narratives for our Rural Residency Programme (FarmArt). Working at the frontiers of natural, social and climatic change, they will interrogate the inspirational resilience and social ties that form when local communities embrace heritage, sustainability, and innovation Our mission is to change the way people think about the climate challenge, and to widely communicate, educate and inspire action on the need for urgent, and achievable, change. Cape Farewell engages with our greatest creative, scientific and visionary minds to work together with clean technology entrepreneurs, sociologists and universities to achieve the non-carbon society we must all aspire to. Find out more at [www.capefarewell.com](http://www.capefarewell.com)