



SERPENTINE COMMUNITY GARDEN SOCIETY

Serpentine Community Garden Society CIO
Serpentine Walks, off-Burlington Road, Buxton, SK17 9AR

Report of the Trustees 1 April 2019 - 31 March 2020

Registered Charity number - 1188016

Registered office - c/o 39 Park Road, Buxton, SK17 6SQ

Date of registration as a charity - 18 February 2020

previously Serpentine Community Farm CIC - company number 09486257

Trustees

The inaugural trustees are:

Margot Ferris

Simon Fussell (Chair)

Madeline Hall (Treasurer)

Anne Holloway

Solicitors

Brooke-Taylor Solicitors

4 The Quadrant, Buxton, SK17 6AW

Bankers

Cooperative Bank

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1. Structure, Governance and Management

SCGS (CIO) was registered as a charity on 18 February 2020 under the terms of a constitution based on the template for good practice published on the gov.uk website. Minor amendments and additions, primarily concerning electronic voting procedures, were incorporated. Continuity with the foundation organisation - Serpentine Community Farm CIC - which was established in 2015 and dissolved on 18 February 2020 as the organisation's status changed, was ensured by appointment of three SCF CIC directors as trustees. Fresh input was secured by appointment of one new trustee and two new 'trustee designates'.

The Board currently comprises four trustees and two trustee designates, all of whom take an active role in organisational development. Further trustees - to a maximum of eleven - will be recruited to the Board in response to a recognised skill or capacity need. Recruitment is done via advertising the role with a description of the key skills, knowledge or experiences being sought and an overview of the role and responsibilities of a trustee. SCGS's own networks and communication channels are used. Selection is through dialogue with other trustees.

Under the terms of the constitution, trustees may serve on the Board for up to 3 years. One-third of Trustees are required to stand down each year. These provisions encourage freshness and dynamism. They could however create unhelpful churn. The advantages and potential disadvantages will be reviewed in the course of the charity's first year. Response to the Covid-19 crisis has included rapid development of IT capabilities and use for meetings. As lockdown measures are eased, we will continue to work with trustees to improve how we exchange and share information.

The Board of Trustees has sustained practice from its precursor Board of Directors of Serpentine Community Farm CIC, meeting every six to eight weeks to review finance, projects and activity and to discuss long-term strategy and direction. The business plan was approved in January 2020. Progress towards achieving the targets included in the plan was reviewed at each Board meeting.

2. Objectives and Activities

The object of the CIO is to advance the education of the public in the subject of horticulture and horticultural practices.

In addition we aim to:

- teach and learn about sustainable growing practices in the High Peak climate; • share knowledge with our volunteers and visitors;
- introduce initiatives and practices that support the aim of long term food security;
- build and maintain an environment where all people are welcome, enjoying what they are doing and having social interaction with others.

Activities in 2019-2020 included:

April: First pre-school visitor group of the year. First delivery of the year of salad tray to Cafe at Green Pavilion. Wednesday workshop - successional sowing.

May: Launch of Nature Tots fortnightly Fridays in partnerships with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. Funny Wonders Flowerpot Workshop. Wednesday workshop. Automatic Irrigation system installed. Picnic tables assembled.

June: Rotary Summer Bazaar. Buxton Garden Trail. Bird boxes donated by Soroptimists. Wednesday Workshop - future planning.

July: 6/7 July hosts for Bumblebee Conservation Trust as part of Buxton Arts Trail. 200 visitors. 14 July Summer Thyme event. 150 people attended, Award Sprit of the Fringe 2019.

August; Flower tasting workshops. Pre-school visitors from Burbage Nursery and Little Stars.

September: Talks and tours with U3A, Trefoil Guild, Inner Wheel. Two candidates started the work experience element of the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award.

October: Final session for Nature Tots:. Volunteer work party of Tarmac staff - installed handrail, constructed and filled octagonal planter. Apple Day. Annual General Meeting. Agreed change of name, application for charitable status.

November: Long-term lease agreed in principle. Planning workshop - 2020 vision. Wednesday workshop - structure of talks and tours.

December: Winter Gathering - 8 December. Substantial contribution made by the Community Payback Team in heavy work and site improvements, erecting a fence and painting metal furniture - a great example of community involvement to mutual benefit. Last working day - Wednesday 18 December.

January 2020: Site reopened after winter break for volunteer activity on Wednesday and Sundays. Community Payback Team's second visit - constructed a large raised bed for fruit bushes. War and Peas published online.

February 2020: Registration as a Charity. Ash tree suffering die back felled by HPBC arborist team. Seedy Saturday - 300+ packs shared. Introductory workshop on Principles of Organic Gardening. War and Peas published in paperback. Stocked in Scriveners, Poole's Cavern and the Pump Room.

March 2020: Seeds shared from foyer of Pavilion Gardens until required to close by nationwide lockdown. Presentation to 30 GPs on Wellbeing project for social prescribing. Covid 19 pandemic declared. Serpentine Community Garden Society Detached established in growers' home garden. SCG closed to visitors. Volunteer team established to maintain site and sustain the growing cycle. Wednesday workshop programme postponed.

3. Achievement and performance 2019/ 2020

Volunteers contributed 3764 hours over the year in registered attendance on site. In addition unregistered, but highly appreciated, hours were invested off site on administration, publicity, planning and practical gardening enriching cultivation of a range of produce. We thank our team of volunteers for their ongoing commitment. Many go well beyond what is asked of them: supporting events, investing time and thought in the garden

and the organisation and always going the extra mile with the work they do to support our community in Buxton and the High Peak.

Education

We advance education in the science, art and practice of horticulture. The teaching and learning is not externally accredited but has its foundation in the authoritative gardening and horticultural advice provided by the Royal Horticultural Society. There is a particular focus on organic gardening methods based on the principles of organic gardening promoted by Garden Organic (previously the Henry Doubleday Research Association). In an informal setting, we work with volunteers to identify the skills they bring and the knowledge and skills they wish to develop. More formally, we offer regular training workshops and courses to consolidate and extend learning. All ages are covered with interventions modified to meet age and experience and to take in to account such factors as learning or social disabilities.

Courses offered in 2019-2020 are recorded in the calendar of activities above. Feedback from participants has been positive, leading to plans for repeat events and extended programmes.

We promote active use of our facilities by local educational and therapeutic providers. Our briefing session for social prescribing was attended by thirty local GPs. The planned well-being course, overseen by a qualified Person Centred Counsellor working alongside horticulturalists, has been postponed due to the Covid-19 crisis but will be rescheduled as circumstances allow.

Children and Young People

Formalising the relationship with our partners who work directly with young people (children's nurseries, child minder groups, schools and colleges) through the provision of a range of services and experiences enables the charity to introduce more young people to the site, allowing them to experience not only food growing, cooking and crafts, and all the associated benefits, but being part of a community space that they can feel a part of.

Culture

Art and culture is a developing strand of SCG volunteer interest. We work with locally based voluntary organisations and individual artists. The site is valued by artists as inspiration and a welcoming host for direct interaction with communities. The site has the potential to play a significant role in delivery of a thriving cultural life in the town as a space where the public and creatives can interact and collaborate on joint projects, often bringing more investment in arts and culture to the local area in the process. We are already recognised as an excellent informal performance space and a great setting for external artworks.

Organisation

Acceptance of our application for registration as a charity was a big step for the organisation. Alongside that recognition, work on securing the future of the project on its current site has progressed. Our landlords, High Peak Borough Council, approved in principle the terms of a 25 year lease, subject to detailed negotiation with council officers. Discussions over the status of near derelict buildings on the site have proved complex and have been frozen as other essential services were prioritised following the national

lockdown. However, matters are now progressing. We look forward to resolution before the end of 2020.

Proactive communications work secured regular update items in the Buxton Advertiser and three articles in the bi-monthly Pure Buxton magazine. Local press and social media were used effectively for a re-branding exercise following registration as a charity. The new name is reflected in a new website domain name, a new joint gmail account, an updated facebook page and updated twitter feed. Weekly working notes are circulated to all members and volunteers. Each month an update is circulated to all supporters. In the March 2020 we set up a daily blog on the website, detailing gardening activity of our chief growers as they worked with us but at distance as they shielded from the pandemic. We reviewed procedures for health and safety and for volunteers and developed an action plans to address improvement points. Individual reviews with all active volunteers were completed.

Our organisational resilience was stress tested at the end of the reporting year. Our chief growers, along with three skilled and knowledgeable horticulturist members of the team were confined to home and their own gardens, as was our resident artist. Other core volunteers conducted personal risk assessments and decided against exposure to groups of other volunteers. The structure for sustaining growing on site and respecting individuals' needs and personal boundaries whilst maintaining contact was swiftly established and is proving robust. Links with other community groups have been strengthened as ventures arising in response to the Covid-19 crisis have brought the importance of community mutual aid into sharp relief.

4. Financial review

Income for the year was £3097.42, a reduction of 24% compared to the previous year (£4,075.94). This was due to a focus on sustaining existing activity without applying for additional grants. One small grant was offered and accepted gratefully. The first sale of a paper back book with all proceeds going to the organisation brought in a modest sum but donations accounted for 94% of our income.

Expenditure at £3,695.18 outstripped income for the first year since establishment of the overall project. This is an exception however, rather than a pointer to future projections. Prospects for significant grant funding are good. (£10,000 has been secured for new activity in 2021-2022. A further £10,000 is pledged to be released when our new lease is signed.)

5. Risk management

As Trustees, we are responsible for overseeing the charity's risk management activities. The Trustee Board manages and monitors SCGS's risks through a Strategic Risk Register which is incorporated in the Annual Business Plan. Strategic Risks are identified following the Annual General Meeting of members, drawing on response to the annual Future Strategy briefing paper.

Risk management of high-level risks that could prevent SCGS from meeting its objectives and of more routine operational matters are kept under regular review. The new risks associated with a national pandemic demand a profound review in 2020-2021.

Engagement of trustees and a committed membership supports review which is both sensitive and robust.

6. Future Plans

Our plans for 2020/2021 involve building on the foundations laid during 2019-2020 to sustain our focus on growing plants and growing people.

We believe that the Serpentine Community Garden can become a centre for sustainability and community development in Buxton, with regional reach and national recognition. The site will provide multiple benefits to the town through the services it provides, contributing to learning and helping to raise the profile of the town and its heritage.

We will continue to develop our profile and external-facing activities; improve our internal systems and processes; reappraise organisational risk and plan to grasp opportunities to extend our community reach.

Trustees

Simon Fussell (Chair)

Madeline Hall (Treasurer)

Anne Holloway

Margot Ferris

Trustees (Designate)

Pete Brown

Carole Garner

July 2020