



SERPENTINE COMMUNITY GARDEN SOCIETY

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

Report of the Trustees 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022

Registered Charity number - 1188016

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

Date of registration as a charity - 18 February 2020

Trustees

Madeline Hall	re-elected	01/04/21	to	31/03/2022
Simon Fussell	re-elected	01/04/21	to	31/03/2022
Pete Brown	re-elected	01/04/21	to	31/03/2022
Carole Garner	re-elected	01/04/21	to	31/03/2022
Derek Bodey	elected	31/10/21	20	31/03/2022

Solicitors

Brooke-Taylor Solicitors

4 The Quadrant, Buxton, SK17 6AW

Bankers

Cooperative Bank

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SERPENTINE COMMUNITY GARDEN SOCIETY

1. Structure, Governance and Management

The Board currently comprises five trustees, 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.

The term of office for trustees is three years, renewable for a further three year term. After a break of a year trustees may stand for election for a return to office. For each of the first three years the longest serving trustee will resign, but may stand for a second term's appointment. Madeline Hall is now in the first year of her second term. Simon Fussell is serving the final year of his first term. Carole Garner and Pete Brown are in the second year of their first term. Derek Bodey is newly elected.

Response to the Covid-19 crisis has included rapid development of IT capabilities and use for meetings. As lockdown measures are eased, we continue to work as 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 two months to review finance, projects and activity and to discuss long-term strategy and direction. The business plan approved in January 2020 has been reviewed, informed by appraisal from a financial consultant engaged with support from the Heritage Fund for Culture Recovery.

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.

Planned activities were adapted in a rapid response to the need for precautionary measures against Covid-19 transmission. Activities included:

March 2021

New website launched.

Successful completion of Culture Recovery Fund (Heritage Fund) project.

Planning approval secured for third polytunnel: 16 letters of support including one from Stewart Medical Centre GPs.

Science Week - soil analysis project in partnership with Transition Buxton, funded by British Science Association, engaged 63 families.

Probus Buxton and District talk online.

Commissioned aerial footage of Buxton icons for introductory section of video showcasing the Community Garden's place in the town and community. Big dig working parties for polytunnel groundwork preparation.

April 2021

Groups working to an agreed sowing and growing plan created in autumn 2020.

Potager planting redesigned and sown and planted.

Garden Manager supported on Gardeniser training programme.

May 2021

Launch of Give Peas a Chance Saturday programme in partnership with Buxton Junior School.

Market stall – £250 in donations.

Polytunnel delivered.

Commissioned drone footage for intro to video. Appointed editor/interviewer/photographer for video showcasing our place in Buxton and the community.

June 2021

Recommencement of face to face workshops for groups of 12 people, booked in advance: salad growing workshop; herb workshop.

July 2021

Piloted Growing Well programme with people referred by GPs and CVS for social prescribing.

Mix it Up Festival Fringe event cancelled as Covid-19 peaked again.

Workshop – Edible Flowers.

Garden Trail weekend opening.

Club Acoustic event – live in the Garden.

Festival Fringe awards ceremony held on site.

Derbyshire Beacon of Hope award received by Steve, Alyson and Madeline.

August 2021

Workshop – Harvesting. Melissa K-G appointed by British Science Association as East Midlands Community Champion 2021-2022.

September 2021

Workshop – tomatoes and tasting.

Rotary Autumn Fair.

Duke of Edinburgh award placement supported by John and Gil began.

October 2021

Second Give Peas a Chance group recruited 13 Y6 pupils. Programme extended as Covid-19 contacts caused cancellation of several sessions.

Apple Day event for regular volunteers.

First stage invitation to apply for revenue funding from National Lottery Community Fund. Members' AGM.

November 2021

Polytunnel 3 in use.

Large shed bought and erected.

Simon and Helen J represented SCG at Derbyshire Freemason's award event, accepting cheque for £500.

Negotiations on lease pursued with vigour.

December 2021

Scaffold boards, wood chip and soil improver sourced for additional raised beds in Polytunnel 2.

Winter Gathering for regular volunteers.

Land Lease separated from Agreement to Lease and Lease on Land and Buildings to simplify negotiations on terms. (HPBC proposals for triggering the lease on Buildings considered inimical to their intended purpose - to enable the charity to access external capital funding.)

January 2022

National Lottery Community Fund agreement for revenue support: £95,914 spread over three years.

Two posts advertised: Gardeniser for 15 hours a week, 46 weeks a year: Growing Well Coordinator for development and delivery of four eight week programmes a year, building to five programmes in the second year and six in the third year.

Growing Plans discussed, developed and shared electronically and in hard copy at face to face event in P3.

February 2022

8 February 2022 lease on land for 25 years signed by Simon and Madeline, signed and sealed by HPBC.

Offer of new shed constructed by carpentry students at Leek and Buxton College accepted.

Seedy Saturday - successful event despite storm and snow. £120 in donations.

March 2022

Melissa K-G and Jim L appointed as job share Gardenisers on 2:1 ratio of 15 hours a week.

Melissa K-G and Ruby S appointed as job share Growing Well Coordinators on 3:1 ratio in year one, 3:2 in year two and equal share in year three.

All contracts effective 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2025.

Seedier Sunday - second opportunity for seed swap attracted twenty visitors and £70 in donations.

Growing Well workshop session for previous and prospective participants.

Programme of Science Week activities in schools organised by Melissa K-G.

VolunteerHours on site

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
April	309	184.5	178
May	471	194	315
June	452	177.5	335
July	397.5	220.75	288.25
August	244.5	230	212.75
September	331	209	270
October	421	226	244.5
November	242	240.25	163
December	218	153	68.25
January	294	111.25	127.75
February	212	140.5	180
March	172	304.5	196
Total	3764	2391.25	2578.5

3. Achievement and performance 2021 / 2022

Volunteers contributed 2579 (2391 in 2020-2021) 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, creating posters and labels, growing at home on windowsills, investing time and thought in the garden and the organisation, supporting our community in Buxton and the High Peak.

3.1 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.

We promote active use of our facilities by local educational and therapeutic providers. The Growing Well programme was successfully piloted early in the year with local GPs, a local care home provider and a new team of CVS social prescribers. Our National Lottery Community Fund award supports continuation and programme development for three years from 1 April 2022. We plan to embed the provision as a valued local service with sustainable funding thereafter.

3.2 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. A new Saturday programme - Give Peas a Chance - launched on 1 May 2021 in partnership with Buxton Junior School has been a great success.

3.3 Culture

Art and culture remains 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 as a welcoming space 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. As precautions against viral spread continue, the benefits of a venue in the open air are being widely recognised.

3.4 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 has progressed. Our landlords, High Peak Borough Council, approved in principle the terms of two 25 year leases, one on the land the the second on the land to include stone store buildings erected in 1898. Detailed negotiation with council officers began in January 2020. The lease on the land was finally signed on 8 February 2022. Agreement to separate the two strands of the lease allowed the land lease to progress, which in turn confirmed the Charity's eligibility for the National Lottery Community Find revenue award.

Discussions over the status of dilapidated buildings on the site continue. In principle HPBC agreed that the terms and conditions should enable the charity to apply for capital funding. However, the detailed schedule proposed by the Council includes compliance with tight time deadlines. There is a risk to the charity and to potential funders of loss of investment should deadlines be unavoidably missed. We hope to resolve the issues, protecting the rights and obligations of both parties so that the intention of the agreement in principle may be honoured.

Local press and social media were used effectively Weekly working notes are circulated to all members and volunteers. Each month an update is circulated to all supporters.

Constraints on onsite activity have continued as we continue to observe strong protocols to minimise risk of viral transmission. The structure for sustaining growing on site and respecting individuals' needs and personal boundaries whilst maintaining contact established shortly after the onset of the pandemic has proved robust - if more extended than anticipated.

We are working towards a consensus model for decision making and a dispersed 'management and supervision' model. This has been stress tested in practice as a core volunteer need to withdraw from hands-one activity for a six month period. Other volunteers stepped up and stepped in for a seamless transfer of responsibilities.

Links with other community groups have been strengthened as ventures arising in response to crisis have brought the importance of community mutual aid into sharp relief. In addition, discrete provision for groups and courses booked in advance has been developed to maximise use of our growing space. Consultation has been initiated with volunteers about the extent and pace of steps in 2022-2023 to open the Garden for larger numbers of visitors, individually and in groups..

4. Financial review

Income for the second year as a charity totalled £16,011, made up of £9,600 in grant awards and £6,276 in donations including associated Gift Aid.

Expenditure has been modest outside of purchase of a large storage shed and financial commitments in completing contracts, allowing £2,648 to be carried forward in cash reserves. This provides a cushion against the anticipated additional costs - rental and service charges - incurred by the lease on the land signed on 8 February 2022. In addition £2,500 has been carried forward to meet the staffing and resourcing needs of the final funded cohort of the Saturday programme, Give Peas a Chance/

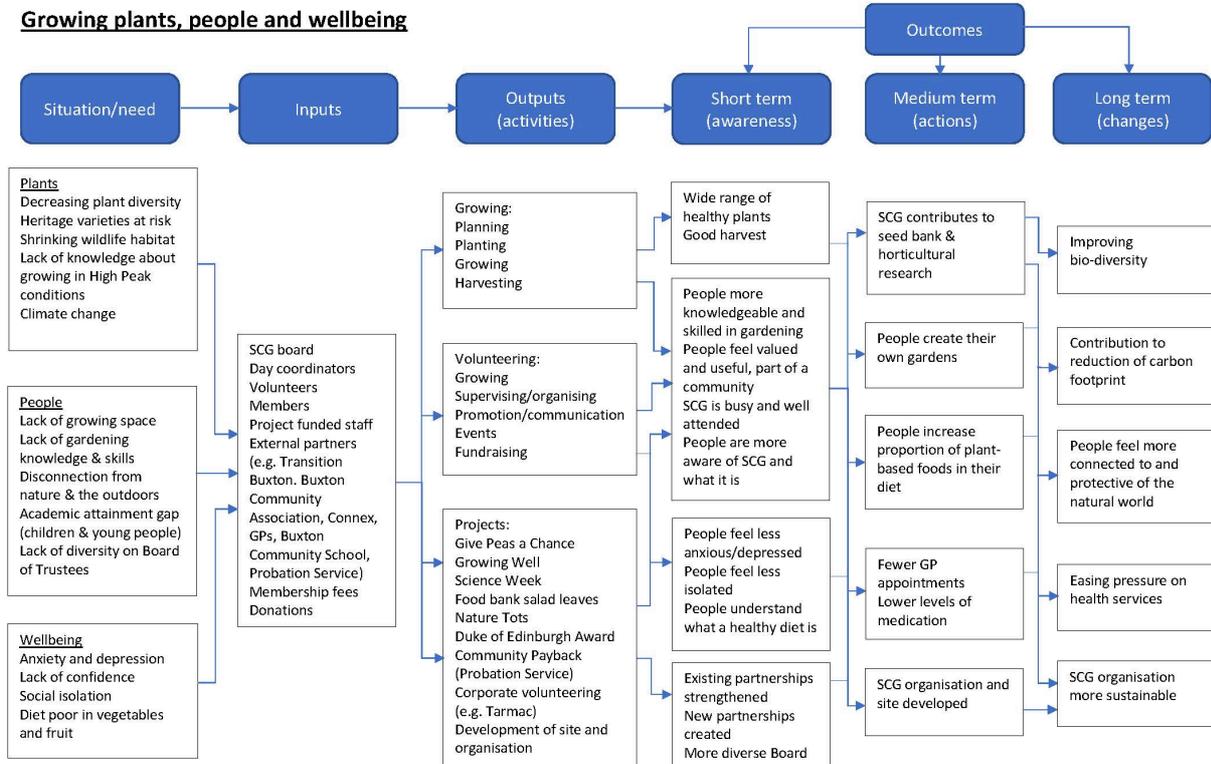
The National Lottery Community Fund award of £96,000 for revenue costs over three years covers consolidation of initiatives in the Community Garden and further development of the Growing Well programme in partnership with GPs, social prescribers and local day care centres.

There is good potential for a significant capital funding award once the terms of the Agreement to Lease the dilapidated stone store buildings on site are finally agreed. (The draft document is with HPBC's legal team.) An initial £10,000 is pledged to be released by a local charitable trust when the Agreement to Lease is signed and discussions have been progressed with major funding bodies about support.

5. Evaluation

We adopt a logic model for evaluation as outlined below:

Serpentine Community Garden – Logic Model for evaluation



6. 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 required a focused review in 2020-2021. For 2022-2023 trustees will focus particularly on reviewing good practice and policies for working effectively with people.

Engagement of trustees and a committed volunteer cadre and membership supports on-going review which is both sensitive and robust.

6. Future Plans

Our plans for 2022/2023 involve building on the foundations laid before and since registration as a charity and the experience of working through the challenges, and unexpected opportunities, of response to the global pandemic, 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)

Pete Brown

Carole Garner

Derek Bodey