

SURREY DOCKS FARM PROVIDENT SOCIETY LTD

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2021



Registered Society No: 22829R

A registered society under the Co-operative & Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, recognised by HM Revenue & Customs as a tax exempt charity

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OVERVIEW

THE FARM

Surrey Docks Farm is a working community farm. We were established in 1975 by local people on the South Bank of the River Thames in London.

For over forty years the Farm has engaged the whole community to learn and care about farming, food provenance and the natural environment.



CONTACT DETAILS

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HIGHLIGHTS

ACTIVITIES & IMPACT OF PANDEMIC

As with many organisations the Covid-19 pandemic had a serious impact on the Farm, both in terms of delivering our community projects and financially.

Alongside these challenges we have continued to support our community.

While the Farm gates were closed to visitors, the team were busy adapting services to deliver a new ambitious development plan that responded to the pandemic.

HIGHLIGHTS

- During lockdowns we adapted delivery to respond to the needs of our participants; e.g. posting individual newsletters or offering 1:1 wellbeing sessions at the Farm.
- We reconfigured the site to provide the community with free access to the Thames path and river gardens, with views over the animal yard. Whilst creating a separate safe space for our more vulnerable participants.
- We engaged the wider community through daily posts on social media reaching: 3,000 people via Instagram and over 5,000 people through Twitter and Facebook.
- We employed and trained two Apprentices, supporting them to develop careers in the Livestock and Horticulture industries.
- Our produce fed over 600 local households via our online shop. During the Spring lockdown we donated over £800 of food from the youth plots to local families.
- We successfully gained funding to carry out capital developments. We installed a new greenhouse, upgraded our toilets and outdoor sinks and made several improvements to our livestock accommodation.
- Our Youth Committee led a Crowdfund campaign that enabled the renovation of our Wildlife Garden, improving the space for nature and people.
- Following a Youth Consultation led by our Youth Committee, we gained funding to establish a new project designed by young people to respond to the needs of local 14-18 year olds.
- We engaged a local business to establish a popular pop-up café on the Thames path.
- We ended the financial year with our free reserves in a better position, building the Farm's resilience.

LIVESTOCK

OVERVIEW

We encourage people to look, touch and learn about livestock. We care for a range of animals including goats, sheep, pigs, donkeys, poultry and small animals.

We are proud to be a proper working farm. We produce meat and eggs which are sold through our farm shop. We encourage people to think about where their food comes from, to support high welfare farms and minimise food miles.

We have an apiary in our orchard with several bee hives. We engage participants to learn about our bees and honey production and sell the honey to our local community.

We support young people to progress into the Livestock industry through our apprenticeship programme.

Every day we muck out the animals, piling dirty straw up on the muck heaps. To speed up the rotting process we 'water' with the run-off and effluent from our bio-digesters. Once rotted, the manure is either used on site for natural fertiliser or loaded into ton bags to deliver to other community gardens. This turns a waste product into a resource.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- We reared 6 piglets that were born in May and 7 piglets that arrived in September. April was a busy month with 17 goat kids and 12 lambs being born.
- We improved our animal accommodation with a new hard standing and field shelter for the donkeys, a permanent goat mountain reusing cobbles from the site and we fixed the sheep barn and pony stable.
- We delivered several bee keeping workshops over the Summer, engaging local residents to learn more about honey production and the importance of pollinators.
- We gained funding from the South East Farmers to purchase a new electric loader which is fuelled by our solar energy and has significantly aided management of the muck heaps.
- We sold over 254 bags of our rotted manure through our gardening shop. We also delivered over 70 ton bags across the borough to community gardens to use as a natural fertiliser for food growing.

LIVESTOCK

"Volunteering with the livestock has been especially helpful during the pandemic. It has been a lifeline to human (and animal) contact, outdoors and exercise which got me through the various lockdowns. The benefits I got were emotional, physical and mental. I felt extremely grateful and lucky to have it."



"After many years working in the corporate world I was needing to ground myself. I was getting panic attacks and felt just out of kilter every day. Even just the one day a week of looking after the livestock on the farm gave me that grounding and purpose. Knowing that animals relied on me getting there to feed them and clean their beds made me think more about mindfulness and calm."

"I was furloughed and with lockdown restrictions, I really felt trapped in my home. Volunteering helped me regain a sense of self, stay active and gave me a place to go where I felt like I contributed and helped build up my sense of purpose."



FOOD GROWING & GREENING

OVERVIEW

This year we maintained the food-growing spaces across our 2.2 acre site with a focus on productivity. We established a weekly online Gardening Shop in response to the increased interest in growing food at home, selling all the resources needed to produce fruits and vegetables in small spaces. We also offered gardening advice; either in person when local customers came to collect, or via posts on our social media.

Our volunteers developed a beautiful new River Garden that was open seven days a week for visitors to access via the Thames path.

We installed a large grant-funded greenhouse, to replace one of our old polytunnels. The greenhouse has increased our accessible food growing space and enables visitors to see what's happening inside through new glass panels. It also reduces waste, as we no longer need to replace the polytunnel's plastic cover.

We established a new horticulture progression route by recruiting our first Horticulture Apprentice. We partnered with Walworth Garden who delivered training in Work Based Horticulture and we ensured the role was accessible with a London Living Wage salary.

We began developing a network to connect and support community gardens, allotments, school gardens and home growers called 'Rotherhithe Community Gardening Network'.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- One Young Farmer successfully gained a micro grant from London Youth to design and deliver a gardening for wellbeing project for the local community, making and giving away wildflower seed kits and engaging the community to plant wildflowers at the Farm.
- We recruited and trained our first ever Horticulture Apprentice.
- Over 300 households used our gardening shop which offered collections twice a week, selling over 200 bags of our compost and many plants.
- 17 plots were tended by local families and adults throughout the growing season.

FOOD GROWING & GREENING



"From the feedback I've received, I believe I have had a powerful impact on the mental wellbeing of the local community as a result of the wildflower planting project. I've had such a unique and unobtainable experience that has played a core role in developing many of my personal skills that I'll need to utilise for the rest of my life!"



"Being a Volunteer Gardener at the Farm is very rewarding. I don't have access to outdoor space where I live so having the chance to get outside each week, contribute to the community and learn new skills has been a great joy."



ENGAGEMENT & EDUCATION

OVERVIEW

We aim to provide opportunities for the whole community. This year the pandemic did restrict or pause some of our usual delivery. However the majority of our work has continued including: providing a range of meaningful volunteer opportunities for local people; delivering a weekly youth programme for those aged 8-14; developing partnership projects with community organisations; linking with local schools; delivering training projects for adult students with learning disabilities; providing raised beds for local people to grow their own food; and much more.

Where onsite delivery wasn't possible due to Covid-19 restrictions, we adapted our services so we could still support those most vulnerable in new ways.

We ensure our participants voices are heard and acted on. This year we worked with our Youth Committee to carry out a consultation with all our young people which highlighted the need for a dedicated project for 14-18 year olds. The Youth Committee and staff worked together to successfully gain funding to deliver a one-year pilot project responding to the needs identified. We were very pleased to launch this new project 'Greenagers' in April 2021 and see the young people's ideas come to life.

YOUNG PEOPLE

- 45 young people aged 8-14 were actively engaged in weekly Young Farmers Clubs. Throughout the lockdowns staff maintained a weekly provision through remote delivery, games, newsletters and food donations for families.
- We saw a huge increase in the level of need and demand for outdoor youth provision during the pandemic. We established after-school 1:1 sessions for those most vulnerable to benefit from the animal and nature therapy the Farm provides.
- The Young Farmers all gained one or more AQA unit award modules to recognise their learning and practical skills. Their work was also recognised with a Special Commendation in the Urban Food Awards announced in Autumn 2020.
- One young person gained the 'Southwark Young Volunteer of the Year' award from Community Southwark for his work leading a social action project at the Farm.

ENGAGEMENT & EDUCATION

"The Farm has developed my daughter's teamwork, social skills and problem solving. All of which have given her the confidence to start new things"



"Working together to muck out, cook meals, or to build a fire makes us feel like a team. We are doing all the jobs together and achieving a goal through teamwork"



"Being in Young Farmers is worthwhile because we are able to DO something and CHANGE something!"



EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT

VOLUNTEERS

- Volunteers are essential to the running of the Farm. During lockdowns we put several procedures in place and were able to continue with small teams working safely outdoors to care for the animals and tend the gardens.
- Over the year we engaged 97 people aged 18+ who volunteered on a regular basis. The majority lived within a few miles of the Farm and they all told us of the tremendous benefit their time at the Farm has had on their physical and mental health, as well as being able to meet other people in their community.
- An additional 40 adults attended on a drop in basis, through our evening Farm Gym group or via the organisation GoodGym on a Sunday afternoon.
- Together volunteers contributed over 9,000 hours of their time over the year.

TRAINING PROJECTS FOR ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

- During lockdowns, when we were unable to welcome our 30 adult students to the Farm, we still kept in regular contact with them and their families or care homes. We wrote and posted weekly newsletters; talked on the phone and when possible hosted family visits to the Farm. We kept the students' growing plots tended and cared for, ready for their return. Any produce harvested was delivered via food packages to families doors and were gratefully received.
- Back on site the students were supported to work safely outdoors, to rebuild their confidence after the impact of shielding and start learning again through AQA accredited training in animal care, food growing and cooking.

PEOPLE & PARTNERSHIPS

- Over 50,000 visitors enjoyed the Farm's free Thames path access, river gardens, pop-up cafe and views over the animal yard.
- We were eager to rebuild our partnership projects in person rather than on screen. For example, when safe to do so, Southwark Youth Offending Service returned to deliver carpentry sessions in the peaceful Farm environment. We also welcomed back volunteers from the Bede to assist with compost production.

EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT



"The value of the Farm as a community space is really high. It still astounds me each time I arrive at the gates that such a different world can exist so successfully in very urban surroundings which is where most of us are stepping from. I see an eagerness from everyone, whether they are working or visiting, to engage with all the different things that are going on. I've loved meeting the other volunteers and hearing about their backgrounds."



"The farm has been so good for my mental health. Being at the farm makes me happy. It really made a difference at a difficult time in my life and now still acts as self care. This is the first place I have truly felt community since living in London, and I've been here 6 years. I feel part of something, connected to the local area and local people."

FEEDING OUR COMMUNITY

OVERVIEW

We have grown and sold fresh, quality, seasonal produce to our local community throughout the pandemic, by adapting to an online farm shop with collections from our gates.

We donated all the food grown and harvested from our youth plots to the participants' families and we recorded how much we gave away through Capital Growth's 'Community Harvest' project.

We have cooked with the produce harvested and reared on the site, both over an open fire with our youth clubs and in a small kitchen space with our adult students with learning disabilities. We've cooked healthy meals, made bread and also processed fruits from the Farm to make a selection of jams and chutneys to add to our farm shop offer.

We developed ideas and consulted with participants about our aim to create a new accessible Community Kitchen. This will provide a dedicated space for community cooking workshops using food harvested from the Farm, provide new jobs and support work targeting food insecurity.

We are proud to be part of the Southwark Food Action Alliance and engage with other members to ensure our work supports the needs of our wider community.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Farm meat, eggs, fruit and vegetables were sold via a new online shop with collections at the gate, providing fresh quality food for over 600 households.
- 120 free food packages were given out to 30 local families during the Spring lockdown
- 45 young people harvested their own produce to take home and share with their families or cook here on site. The groups also took part in a workshop with Food Foundation to contribute to the National Food Strategy.
- 6 adult students with learning disabilities attended cooking sessions in small groups to gain skills in cooking, baking and producing jams.

FEEDING OUR COMMUNITY



"My child has a much greater awareness of the range of vegetables available and how they grow. She also has developed a deeper understanding of where meat comes from. The Farm has greatly impacted my daughter's awareness and interest in healthy eating"

"Cooking at the Farm makes me feel joyful because I like to cook and it's amazing to pick the food and then a few minutes later eat it"



"I have taken home lots of vegetables we have grown at the Farm and taught my family how to make some of the meals we've cooked here"



ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

OVERVIEW

We are a demonstration site for sustainable energy practices. We harvest rainwater to flush the toilets and water the gardens; we gain energy from our solar panels; and we boil the kettle with gas from our bio-digester (which is fuelled by animal waste).

This year we needed to replace some of our machinery. Thanks to grant funding we were able to purchase an electric lawnmower and strimmer which we can charge with the solar energy. We also chose an electric loader to manage our muck heaps.

As a working farm in central London we're not the usual place you'd associate with wildlife, but we work hard to make the Farm a home for nature. We 'garden for wildlife' and follow organic principles. We grow wildflowers for pollinators, leave nettle patches and log piles for invertebrates. We install bee, bat and bird boxes and have a dedicated Wildlife Garden and pond that hosts over 50 frogs each Spring.

We work with organisations in the Southwark Biodiversity Partnership to deliver the Southwark Nature Action Plan 2020 by increasing biodiversity at the Farm; with a particular focus on improving habitats for amphibians, house sparrows and bees.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- We engaged local people to learn about wildlife both on and off site. We posted our wildlife sightings on social media and via a new dedicated webpage.
- Thanks to 130 backers through the Youth Committee's crowdfund campaign and with support from the Greater London Authority we renovated our Wildlife Garden to improve the space for nature and people.
- We took part in RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch in January, and thanks to donations from our supporters we fed our wild bird visitors all year round.
- We planted 125 additional hedge whips.
- 10 young people took part in London Youth's 'Keeping it Wild' social action project. Leading an online campaign to raise awareness of pollinators.

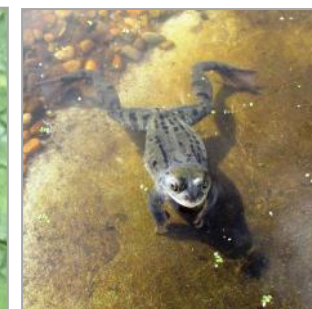
ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY



"Surrey Docks Farm is a wonderful oasis of learning and fun for so many visitors. I hope it continues it's valuable work for a long time to come. City-living youngsters have a fantastic opportunity to be with wildlife and to learn about many aspects of nature and caring for the environment."



"Being in the wildlife garden makes me feel like I've escaped from the rest of the world. I am calm, relaxed, quiet and peaceful there. We are quiet so the birds don't fly away and we can watch them"



FINANCE

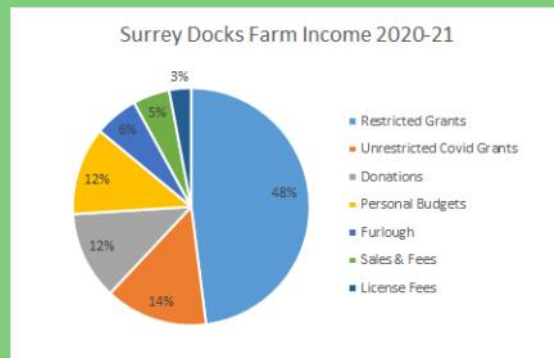
FINANCIAL REVIEW

The impact of the pandemic meant this was a particularly unusual year for the Farm's finances. The Farm's funding model changed. We usually budget for 70% funding to come from income generation and 30% from grants to keep our community projects free to access.

We faced a sudden lack of income generation opportunity with the Covid-19 restrictions in place, which resulted in the loss of over £150k forecasted income in the budget. To fill this gap we relied heavily on grant funding to survive. As such in this financial year 62% of our income was received from grants (including unrestricted grants which contributed to Core costs).

Our turnover in a normal year is around £500k. The prior year was also an unusual year as, thanks to significant capital grants for the completion of the Riverfront Development, we received income of £1.7 million. In this financial year income was over £600k which was high due to significant capital grants for site upgrades and improvements.

A breakdown of the income is shown in the pie chart below:



We received over £70,000 in donations that were mainly smaller donations generously given from over 700 local supporters! We also received some larger donations from local organisations and businesses. The Management Committee and staff team would like to send a special thanks to everyone who supported us and ensured the future of the Farm.

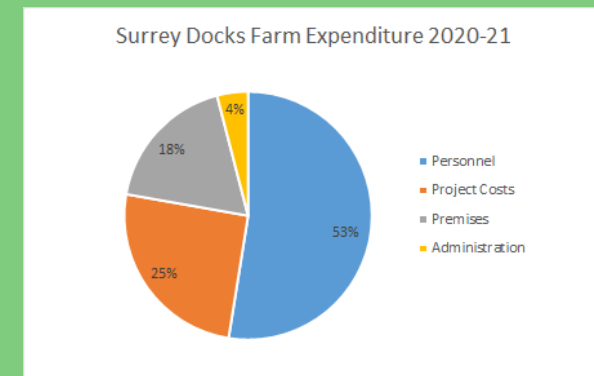
We engaged a new business to deliver a pop-up café on to the Thames path that successfully launched in August 2020, providing a resource for visitors and walkers as well as a regular monthly license fee.

FINANCE

After accounting treatments had been applied the total expenditure for the financial year was £585,333.

This year some significant capital projects were completed thanks to grant funding, including the installation of a new greenhouse to replace one of our poly-tunnels and an upgrade of the toilet and hand washing facilities. In addition, thanks to sponsorship from the South East Farmers, we purchased a new machine to manage our muck heaps.

A breakdown of expenditure is shown in the pie chart below:



YEAR END RESULT

The Farm's financial statements show an accounting surplus of £48,706 and result in free cash reserves increasing from £43,244 to £115,699.

Creating a surplus in subsequent years is essential in order to continue to build and hold four months reserves. These reserves will increase the resilience of the Farm, helping us survive any future unforeseen events.

Overall we have had a successful financial year, rebuilding reserves whilst continuing to support and serve our community. We're pleased to be in a more positive position, ready to face the challenges ahead.

For full details of the Farm's finances, please see the accompanying document: Surrey Docks Provident Society Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2021

THANK YOU

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Farm is governed by a team of unpaid volunteers who meet on a monthly basis to steer the direction and guide the organisation. Thanks to:

Brett Bennett-Smith, Chair; Matthew White, Secretary; Jolin Holme, Treasurer
Mary Budd, Alan Chadborn, Meg Wilson, Rosemary Petronis, Andrew Tipler

STAFF TEAM

Our dedicated staff team have gone above and beyond through this challenging year:

Gemma Hooper, Manager
Claire Elson, Livestock Manager
Lucy Tarver-Jones, Youth Manager
James Taylor, Horticulture Manager
Tracey Neil, Education Manager
Melisha Khyriem-Edwards, Finance Officer
Rachel Smith, Training Coordinator; Pat Lipscombe, Training Coordinator
Rebecca Clarke, Green Mentor
Fay McMath and Jessica Thompson, Livestock Workers
Sarah Hartley, Jo Baden-Morgan and Andrew Kerr, Youth Workers
Christopher Simmonds, Livestock Apprentice; Caty Palmer, Horticulture Apprentice
Cecil Lee, Cleaner

VOLUNTEERS

Surrey Docks Farm is lucky to have a team of dedicated volunteers who contribute to the running of all areas of the Farm; including animal care, gardening, maintenance, giving out produce purchased through our online farm shop and supporting our community projects. Volunteers bring ideas, enthusiasm and a wide range of skills. Volunteers are essential to the Farm, we simply wouldn't exist without them.

THANK YOU

FUNDERS

Surrey Docks Farm would like to send our thanks to the funders who have supported the organisation this year contributing to both delivery and core costs.

These funders include:

Southwark Council, National Lottery, Greater London Authority, City Bridge Trust, United St Saviour's Charity, Veolia Environmental Trust, South East Farmers, British Land, Baily Thomas Charitable Fund, London Community Response Fund, The Farmers Company, The Finnis Scott Foundation, A2Dominion, Amicable Society Rotherhithe, London Youth, Jack Petchey Foundation, Tesco Bags of Help, Capital Growth, Lloyds of London and the Rotherhithe Consolidated Fund.



THANKYOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Thank you to our community, who have supported the Farm by promoting, fundraising, buying produce and generously donating. We're particularly grateful for the incredible financial support shown by local people when the Farm was facing real pressures during the Spring 2020 lockdown.