



Social Farms  
& Gardens



6 April 2020

City farms and community gardens are important to the physical and mental health of Londoners.

To survive the COVID-19 crisis and its long term economic impact, we need the help of national government and local councils immediately, during and beyond the end of the current crisis.

We ask for:

- Funds equivalent to the Small Business Grants in support of for-profit businesses to be available to charities that raise funds through enterprise. As charities, we do not currently qualify for these grants because we do not receive business rate relief;
- Funding for core costs such as salaries to maintain the ability to deliver services to everyone in our communities promptly once lockdown ends;
- For government support to local councils so funding can be provided to cover the very significant shortfall in generated income expected over the next year;
- Essential worker status for staff that care for animals and grow/provide substantive food to their community, allowing movement and access to childcare and facilities;
- Advice on whether charity staff on furlough can volunteer to carry out essential work with the charity they work for. Support in securing dispensation for this to happen or access to an alternative source of financial support if this is not the case.

City farms and community gardens generate up to 80% of their income through school visits, charitable enterprise (cafes, markets, team days), events, produce sales and donations. Like our commercial peers, we are facing a significant and ongoing drop in generated income. However our loss to income cannot be offset by furloughing essential staff, and we are not currently eligible for the Small Business Grants.

Our organisations must retain core staff to care for city farm animals, to maintain affordable provision of fresh food, and to maintain the mental health of our vulnerable beneficiaries, with online outreach.

We are very experienced in supporting our local communities, providing unique spaces and opportunities for everyone, including vulnerable people, older people with dementia, people experiencing anxiety and depression, young people, disabled people, and people with learning difficulties.

We need to be there for our beneficiaries when the crisis begins to end. We need income to exist.

London's 13 city farms alone are estimated to save statutory services £19 million a year.

When the immediate crisis abates, city farms and community gardens will be places for people to recover from issues caused by this crisis, including trauma, anxiety, depression, isolation, fear of going out, and loss of work. We are skilled in volunteer management, education, career development and promoting positive mental health. Our sites provide fresh food, fresh air, and opportunities to connect with nature and farming. We have space for social distancing, outstanding handwashing provision and highly qualified staff. However, without urgent financial support, we will not survive to deliver these essential services to Londoners.

Like other charities, we now face sudden and extreme financial pressure. We look forward to hearing how councils and government are able to provide support for our sector to continue through this crisis so that we can continue to support Londoners.

**Signed by the Chairs, Trustees, Staff, Volunteers and service users of:**

Calthorpe Community Garden; Core Landscapes, a Core Arts Project; Culpeper Community Garden; Deen City Farm and Riding School; Freightliners City Farm; Hackney City Farm; Hammersmith Community Gardens Association (HCGA); Kentish Town City Farm; Lambourne End Centre; Mudchute City Farm; Mudlarks Community Garden; Newham City Farm; Social Farms & Gardens; Spitalfields City Farm; St Mary's Secret Garden; Stepney City Farm; Surrey Docks City Farm; Sydenham Garden; Vauxhall City Farm; Wellgate Community Farm; William Hobbayne Community Gardens; Woodlands Farm Trust.

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