

# GREEN RESILIENCE

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024 - 2026

Our ambition is for an abundance of community growing and nature places and spaces integral to the well-being of people and planet



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# 1: ORGANISATION SUMMARY

**Social Farms & Gardens is a UK wide charity representing and supporting community gardens and social farms. We have over 3000 members growing and providing nature-based activities for the health and wellbeing of people and planet.**

We promote, support, and represent our members through a practical and effective range of activities. We bring our members together to build relationships, collaborations and networks that are caring, consistent, realistic, and empowering for communities and people.

We work with our members on Community Growing and local food, individual and community health and well-being, social, care, and sustainable farming, action for climate, nature, and soil.

We operate through grants from local, regional, and national government and independent charitable funding sources. We generate additional income through the delivery of specialist services, consultancy, and training.

**OUR VISION:** People and communities reaching their full potential through Community Growing and Nature-Based activities as a part of everyday life

**OUR MISSION:** Supporting people and communities to improve the health and well-being of people and planet through Community Growing and Nature-Based activities

**OUR VALUES:** Land based community development, mutual support, access to green space for all. We build strong relationships, collaborations and networks that are inclusive and empowering for communities and people

**EXPERTISE:** We are a UK wide charity with a grassroots membership. We have built an expertise in supporting community food growing, community development of green space, social and care farming, advising on acquiring and securing land for growing, and collaborating to carry out these activities. We use a peer-to-peer approach to delivery, working across networks, and sectors, advocating for and with members on matters of strategy, policy development and implementation. We have an ever-expanding bank of resources and have built 40 years' experience and knowledge through delivering support to the sector

**UNIQUENESS:** Our members are a diverse and talented network who engage local communities in delivering positive development and change to address the challenges and opportunities facing our communities and planet

## 2: STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

**To work with members and partners, using our collective knowledge and shared vision, to advocate, inspire, and enable Community Growing and nature-based solutions to improve the wellbeing of people and planet**

### DEVELOP PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

- Deliver in key areas: representing and advocating for our sector, advice on a range of horticulture, agriculture, land, and organisational topics; supporting practitioners and volunteers to develop skills and resources; helping develop new community gardens and other Community Growing sites; advice on funding and income generation; developing and delivering projects in collaboration, for and with partners and members and across sectors
- Develop and pilot new initiatives that help build capacity for growing projects and organisations, who have a range of ambitions, from growing food to delivering community support. Issues to the fore include developing opportunities to address climate action, soil recovery, biodiversity, regenerative growing, inclusion, growth, confidence and profile of people and sites
- Build member networks to further enable peer to peer capacity building, with support from core country and regional staff teams

### SUPPORT AND GROW THE MEMBERSHIP

- Support a wide range of projects, organisations, sites, and hubs in communities, recognising all communities can benefit from growing and community gardens
- Welcome and support more members, established and new, to this inclusive, diverse, and unique network
- Working hands-on as a consistent source of support with communities across the UK
- Working with the growing sector, through forums and on the ground delivery partnerships to help ensure the sector has skills and is knowledgeable and capable
- Working on the sector's behalf, with partners, including central, devolved and local government and public agencies, local authorities, third sector infrastructure support organisations, NHS, academics, sector experts and other partner and collaborative organisations



## STRENGTHEN AND GROW THE ORGANISATION'S ROLE

- Solidify the organisation's core values, continuing to align with the membership's core values, of community development, mutual support, and access to green space for all
- Develop policy, resourcing and support for the sector
- Consider the potential of devolving - functions; staffing; funding; governance and decision making 'subsidiarity' - whilst maintaining the strength of UK wide working aligning with the broader strategic priorities of Social Farms & Gardens

Gardeniser Training  
Sustainable Thinking Scotland CIC  
Falkirk, Scotland



### 3: STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Social Farms & Gardens has built up a strong membership network and reputation at both community and strategic levels. Our growing reputation, reach and membership create opportunities for development by expanding the range of support we can offer to those directly involved in community growing projects and social and sustainable farming

#### INCREASING OUR OFFER

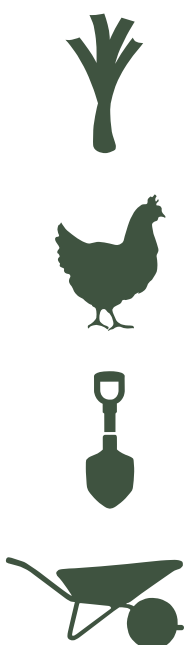
- Provide support that members and partners are asking for, delivered by a trusted and respected partner - Social Farms & Gardens
- Embed Community Growing, and land based community development in local communities
- Increase opportunities for Green Care including development and promotion of the Green Care Quality Mark
- Develop specific support for climate, nature, and biodiversity delivery
- Provide opportunities to our members to learn about inclusive green spaces, and to look at our own practices around Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Develop Social Farms & Gardens website. Curate and update resources



## SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS

- Specialised support, training, and mentoring sessions on issues from year-round growing to governance and everything in between
- Action on climate change, through the positive and practical solutions of Community Growing and nature-based activities
- Supporting projects to sustain their activities and flourish
- Partnering on place or issue-based projects and helping to develop local collaborations
- Supporting community groups trying to secure suitable land and providing specialist planning advice
- Delivering support and resources for setting up a site, engaging people, partnership working, growing a volunteer base, securing funding and site design for small or larger sites
- Conducting research and consultation for community organisations and partners, local authorities, devolved and central governments
- Providing 'Gardeniser Pro' and 'Train the Trainer' training to build capacity in the sector
- Provide support, guidance and quality assurance with the 'Green Care Quality Mark'
- Provide training on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Provide additional expertise as required from experienced Field Workers and Members

Global Gardens  
Cardiff, Wales

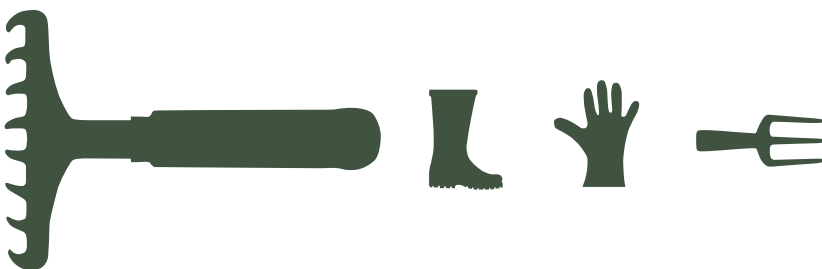


## ADVICE AND MANAGEMENT SERVICES FOR PARTNERS

We currently work with partner organisations across the sectors, sharing expertise and helping to deliver projects and programmes that support community development and environmental stewardship through Community Growing and nature, food, and health-related activities.

There is potential to provide more advice and expertise to national and devolved governments, local authorities, and public sector bodies. These could include:

- Providing specialist consultancy services
- Co-designing policies that are necessary for the growth of Community Growing and the green care sector
- Setting up Community Growing collaborations across sectors and sites
- Supporting the development of collaboration between groups and local authorities on Food Growing Strategy implementation, and other policy areas like green health, land for growing, biodiversity and climate action. Ensuring that our members and their communities' needs and ambitions are reflected in realistic, community-led strategies
- Collaborating with partners to help meet shared objectives. Possible partners include other national/local organisations working to address our themes, public and private landowners, environment agencies, utility companies, land developers, etc
- Providing a service to local authorities to help them meet their statutory duties to report, monitor and evaluate food growing strategies, land use and protection of green space, climate action measures and public health and well-being
- Providing quality assurance for public agencies commissioning green care with the Green Care Quality Mark



## MANAGING GRANTS

Social Farms & Gardens is experienced in managing and distributing funds in partnership with governments, local authorities, public agencies, foundations, and businesses. We ensure realistic and cost effective spend of grants and are experienced in Participatory Budgeting.

We are the lead organisation for those involved in Community Growing.



## 4: OUR MEMBERS

**The key reasons members give for joining Social Farms & Gardens are: to get specific advice, support, representation, and advocacy; to benefit from being part of a wider network and movement; linking to other projects and peer to peer capacity building; ideas for innovation and enterprise; and to be sustainable and thrive**

### MEMBERS

Social Farms & Gardens has over 3,000 member organisations and groups representing their local communities. It is free to be a member of Social Farms & Gardens. Our membership broadly fits into the categories of Community Growing, care and city farming, green care and social prescribing. Many member groups are led by volunteers, others are delivering statutory services. Our membership is growing, particularly with the number of Community Growing groups rapidly increasing across the UK.

Most members deliver from multifunctional sites that yield holistic and sustainable outcomes in areas such as: individual and community health and wellbeing; therapeutic interventions; food production; tackling food waste including distributing surplus food; community development and community cohesion through stewardship of land and nature; climate action through regenerative growing methods and education; bio-diversity enhancement - for example, habitat conservation and watershed management.

Our members bring local people of all ages and abilities together in a shared activity, creating stronger communities, reducing social isolation, and getting more people involved in making life better in and for their communities.

Our members use different titles, mainly: care, city, community, social, or urban farms, community gardens, allotments, orchards, and therapeutic gardens. Whatever the title, they all connect people to nature and are invaluable to communities. We have the privilege of working with and celebrating our diverse membership. Sharing common aims, our members come in all shapes and sizes:

- Small groups led by volunteers with no paid staff in shared community garden space to sizeable charities delivering local services that address: food insecurity, healthy food choices, recycling and food surplus, physical and mental health and community cohesion
- Care farms delivering commissioned health and social care services to city and community farms connecting citizens with farming
- Sites in rural, urban, remote, and suburban settings to regional 'food hubs'
- Pocket parks and patchwork farms to small farm size
- Back alley, verge and guerrilla growing to school garden, farms, and forest schools
- Food enterprises including community supported agriculture schemes and urban agriculture to vegetable box schemes, market gardens and co-operatives

# 5: CURRENT PROGRAMMES & PROJECTS

## ADVOCACY

We represent our members through our advocacy and public affairs work. We are strategically placed to lead on key issues that we know are important to our members and communities - including individual and community health and wellbeing, regenerative growing of local food, practical local action on climate change and the multiple benefits of nature-based activities. We partner with organisations to provide opportunities and a voice for our members at a strategic level.

## ADVICE & RESOURCES

We provide valuable advice and a suite of free (to members) downloadable resources accessed via our website on key topics ranging from composting to volunteer engagement, as well as signposting to key contacts. We can provide more specialist advice on a paid basis to members when funding is available. Our website has a range of case studies showcasing our members' work. We share policy and consultation responses to our supporters who can use them for their own responses.

## COMMUNITY LAND ADVISORY SERVICE

We have a specialist in depth, land advisory service based in Wales and Scotland, delivered across the UK providing independent advice for both groups looking for land and landowners.

## NETWORK BUILDING

We build strong resilient networks throughout the UK with Community Growing projects, Care Farms, City Farms and School Farms and participate in a range of networks advocating and sharing knowledge.

## PEER TO PEER LEARNING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

We practice asset-based community development, building on the assets that are found within communities, mobilising individuals, associations, and institutions to come together to realise and develop their strengths and practice peer to peer learning and capacity building. This contrasts with deficit-based interventions that focus on identifying and servicing of needs.

## TAILORED TRAINING

Designed and delivered for sites or groups on a broad range of topics from 'Designing and running community consultations', 'Essentials of community garden design', 'Designing a programme of year-round engagement' and 'Income generation' to 'Effective composting in your setting'. We aim to identify and coach practitioners to develop their skills and capacity to lead on practical and engaging garden related activities in their community. We also co-design and deliver specialist training programmes on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and resilience of community garden organisers.

## TRAINING

Gardeniser Pro is the first ever accredited training programme for community garden organisers. Gardeniser Pro provides a formal qualification that recognises the range of professional skills required for running a community garden, farm, or growing space. The programme also supports a UK wide network of 'Gardenisers' and trainers, supporting the sector.

## GREEN CARE QUALITY MARK

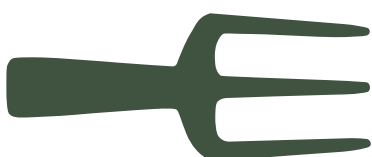
A UK-wide quality assurance standard for the green care sector that demonstrates to service users, funders, and commissioners that the holder runs a safe and responsible organisation. This quality assurance mark helps grow the green care sector as a whole through clear quality standards that bridge the gap between providers and commissioners, over time providing more green care places for the people who need them.

## FOOD GROWING STRATEGIES

We work with a range of local agencies involved in writing and consulting on their Food Growing Strategies and Local Food Plans, supporting local authorities, government departments, public agencies, and other key organisations to develop and implement their strategies, networking them with other projects and partners.



Community Co-Design Training,  
The Paper Garden,  
Southwark, London



## UK & REGIONAL NEWS BULLETINS

We distribute online information to over 3,000 member contacts with news, events, resources, and funding opportunities.

## RESOURCE ROUND UP

We provide a monthly round up of additional funding opportunities for a small annual subscription.

## PARTNERSHIPS

We partner and collaborate with members and other organisations in all sectors to deliver our objectives on the ground and to advocate for the sector.



## RESPONDS TO THE NEEDS...

...of Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland; England and the English regions delivering a variety of targeted programmes and activities for example:

- WALES have developed the very successful Swansea Community Growing Network and manage the Edible Cardiff Network supporting over 40 organisations across Cardiff. Wales provides an in-depth land advisory service.
- NORTHERN IRELAND delivers a Growing Resilience programme based on peer to peer skill-sharing, capacity building, and networking in each local council area.
- SCOTLAND provides the Community Land Advisory Service and is a key member of the Community Growing Forum Scotland.
- ENGLAND - London organises capacity building, networking, and specialist training programmes in Diversity and Inclusion and resilience for community garden organisers.

## POLICY DEVELOPMENT

We engage in significant policy development including - Scotland: Good Food Nation and Community Empowerment Acts; National Planning Framework 4; Net Zero and Bio-diversity Plan. Wales: Well-being of Future Generations Act. NI: Climate Change Bill; Primary Policy Development on The Case for a Benchmark Standard for Community Growing and Allotment Provision in NI. UK: National Food Strategy, supporting implementation of policies that meet our vision and mission.

# 6: OPPORTUNITIES

## Community Growing

**OUR AMBITION:** is for an abundance of Community Growing and nature places and spaces integral to the well-being of people and planet. Community Growing as a movement and sector is maturing and reaching critical mass. This is a transformational opportunity for the UK

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE SECTOR

Rapidly growing membership and increase in demand for support from established and new projects

SF&G has built up a strong membership network and a good reputation at both community and strategic levels. Our growing reputation, reach and membership creates opportunities for development

There is a relevant policy context

Requests for information and specialist advice from local authorities, public agencies, housing associations. Emerging opportunities and requests from projects and partners to help with developing local collaborations

Community Growing offers a range of health and wellbeing opportunities. Community gardens and other growing sites and their resources can be integral to supporting and sustaining green and outdoor activities; a base for getting people young and old, and in between, outside

Community Growing is an accessible and low-cost entry point for delivering a wide range of health, wellbeing, social, skills and environmental activities; however, there is a risk of failure when the model and support is not realistic and appropriate

### SOCIAL FARMS & GARDENS ROLES & RESPONSES

SF&G key role is providing advice and support and representing the sector. To be able to respond to increasing member demand, we need to increase operational capacity and financial stability to ensure sustainability, for members and SF&G

SF&G and our network of members is in a unique position to deliver practical projects in communities that meet national and local government targets on sustainable food, climate, environment, and health and well being

SF&G can align our work on the ground with UK, devolved country and local government policies

SF&G has experienced Staff, Members and Field Workers and a wealth of resources to tender for consultations, reports, and action plans. SF&G is experienced in co-ordination, co-delivery and networking for members and partners to make the most of these opportunities

SF&G can be the link to strategic partners and those at policy level, to make sure that the value of engaging with Community Growing sites and projects is recognised. We can broker collaborative projects

SF&G can provide technical, business and governance support to strengthen organisations, increase sustainability and reduce the risk of failure

# 6: OPPORTUNITIES

## Green Care

Green Care: the structured therapy, treatment or activities that take place in natural surroundings for people with a defined need. It recognises the instinctive connection between nature and health.

Green Care is delivered in a variety of settings including social, care, school and community farms, community gardens, woodlands and orchards and includes animal-assisted services.

**OUR AMBITION: to continue to raise the standards of the services delivered and provide support to the sector as it develops and grows in importance in helping to improve people's health and well-being whilst in green spaces**

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE SECTOR

Benefits of Green Care are becoming more widely accepted, including the inclusion in the NHS Green Social prescribing Toolkit

For there to be a UK wide accepted quality assurance scheme for Green Care providers

Green Care Coalition (GCC) continues to grow in strength and voice as the wider network of Green Care providers

Increase in the types of providers offering Green Care services

To raise the profile of the benefits of Green Care to attract more funding opportunities

### SOCIAL FARMS & GARDENS ROLES & RESPONSES

SF&G, having been signposted in the Toolkit, to continue work in collaboration with partners to champion the benefits of investing resources in this sector on behalf of its members

For SF&G's Green Care Quality Mark (GCQM) to become the recognised and accepted quality assurance scheme for Green Care providers

SF&G continue its key role within the GCC and work to further develop the network and support it can provide

Ensure that advice and support provided continues to evolve to cater for the increasing variety of providers within the sector

Continue to advocate for our members to ensure benefits are widely known and accepted with all stakeholders

# 7: OPERATING MODEL AND GOVERNANCE

## OPERATING MODEL

Social Farms & Gardens is a UK wide membership organisation, registered in England and Wales as a company No: 2011023 & as a charity no: 294494 and in Scotland registered as a charity no: SCO39440

## GOVERNANCE - BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Social Farms & Gardens have a committed Board of Trustees, with a range of skills - our Board is selected directly from our membership.

## LEADERSHIP

We have a strong representational Executive Team from senior staff throughout the UK, delivered through a horizontal management and culture, accountable to the Board of Trustees.

## STAFF

Social Farms & Gardens has an experienced and talented staff team with expertise in community development, community growing, care farming, networking, planning and land issues, regenerative agro-ecology, food strategies, related government policies and policy development, renewables, community enterprise, specialist training, project management, accreditation, finance, funding and business development, inclusion, partnership working and collaboration.

## COUNTRY AND REGIONAL TEAMS

Operating UK wide in the 3 devolved administrations of Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland; and in London and the English regions, has benefits for collaboration and shared learning across our staff teams and membership. Social Farms & Gardens are connected to European and international networks with similar aims and ambitions.



## CONTACT US:

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