

## Growing Sustainably Forum event 22.06.2023

### Victory Hall and Community Gardens, Campsea Ashe

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Photos: Daniel Wareing; Laurence Moss, member of Steering Group of Greenprint Forum

This event was co-produced by the Greenprint Forum and Wild About Campsea to stimulate sharing of knowledge and experience of community growing projects and raise awareness of the support available from key external agencies.

It was attended by 40 delegates including representatives of voluntary groups, environmental organisations, and parish councils, as listed in Appendix 1.

The event was chaired by Jane Healey, Chair of the Greenprint Forum, and hosted by Wild About Campsea.



A standout key message to takeaway for anyone thinking of setting up a community garden is to try and collaborate with an established local group or body, such as your parish council and/or village hall committee.

As well as potentially helping with practical needs such as identifying a plot of land and securing a water supply, acting under the auspices of an established partner organisation can help unlock doors to more funding opportunities as well as saving you the need for your own documents of governance such as safeguarding and health and safety policies.

### Opening by Clare Matterson

Clare Matterson, a Coordinator of Wild About Campsea (and also Director General of the [Royal Horticultural Society](#)), opened with a few brief but key points.

Clare emphasised the importance of gardening and how it contributes to overall happiness, through the benefits to physical and mental health as well as the opportunities it creates to bring communities together and enabling people to meet one another and involve the next generation. With everyone involved doing their bit, and getting their hands in the soil, community growing projects can do plenty of good at the level of the individuals as well as contributing to the greater good.



## Campsea Ashe Community Gardens, Peter Marett

Peter Marett is a Coordinator of Wild About Campsea, who gave us an overview of WAC and their community gardens, following his presentation, Peter took us on a guided walk and talk through the gardens.

It all started during Covid lockdowns, with the Wilson family who realised that people had more time available meaning that some of this time could be channelled into improving biodiversity in the village.

They started a Whatsapp group, which then became a socially-distanced meet up in the recreation ground. This “wildlife friendly village network” started out by encouraging residents to devote 20% of their gardens to boosting biodiversity. The group leafleted the village and continued to meet informally, and repurposed the acronym “NIMBY” to instead stand for “Nature in my Back Yard”.

It soon became clear that not everyone in the village had a large garden, and there were also no allotments, so they considered trying to find a place to take their interests further. The Parish Council conducted a survey of the village, which identified a desire in the community to care for nature and an appetite for gardening.

The group saw that an answer to meet these desires could be a community garden, which would demonstrate 3 outcomes:

- Care for the soil – keep it all organic with no chemicals added, and with no digging involved (as there are a range of physical abilities within the group)
- Care for insects
- Production of food



There would also be no dedicated plots or schedules for individuals, but rather a truly communal arrangement whereby everybody contributes the work that they are able to do and take what you like. The generosity works both ways – so anyone can take and consume the food produced (you don’t have to be a member of the group) but we would like everyone to try to contribute time, even if only a little, or donate resources, and remember not to take all the food at once!

3 different plots were considered: at the church yard, the recreation ground and the community nature reserve. The churchyard was (unsurprisingly) full of graves and did not meet potential capacity requirement needs, the nature reserve had nesting nightingales, which left the Campsea recreation ground – the community garden was able to slot in around the football field, playground and village hall.





This project was a collaboration between 3 different parties: the parish council, the village hall committee, and of course Wild About Campsea. Due to the informality of the group, with no official titles or a bank account WAC were unable to apply for grants alone. This was where the parish council helped them as they took them under their wing, meaning they would be able to apply for grants under the auspices of the parish council. The collaboration has enabled good functioning and collective support to the project, helping with the provision of the plot of land and access to a supply of water from the village hall adjacent.

#### Phase 1: Spring 2022

- ESC awarded the project a grant from the scheme Field to Fork, which enabled them to fund the raised beds at differing heights (to have increased accessibility and inclusivity). They had timber at the bottom of the beds where there were even ship wood shavings, and fleeces of sheep!

#### Phase 2: Summer 2022

- ESC had more funding from the mental health booster fund
- This allowed them to install the cabin and rainwater capture facilities
- Compost heaps were added
- 400 trees of mixed native species have been planted to augment the perimeter hedge

#### Phase 3: ?

- They would love to be able to develop the project further with the desire for hotbeds, more tree planting- fruit and willow (for crafts), increased worm farming (very small scale has already started in the form of worm composting in-bed), and a craft shed – there has already been interest in crafting with willow
- This project would not have been able to run without the funding received, so they also want to explore this how they can do these elements on a budget, more price-friendly





- They want to have more interpretative signage to encourage more uptake, as there may still be a little confusion as to who can join in. This would hopefully enable more people with differing skillsets to join in, enabling more learning opportunities for all, including young people. It all depends on people!

#### Barriers and how these were overcome

- No space: with collaboration from the village hall and the parish council, a section of land was able to be allocated
- No money: the project was able to secure funding from ESC, as well as crowdfunding from the community and the repurposing of junk to save money
- No volunteers: with publicity and special events, they were able to find the people-power. Even if not all are as active as others, all are interested.
- “Red tape”: the parish council aided as they were able to be apply for funds via the PC and conduct the project under their documents of governance (e.g. safeguarding policy)
- Damage/theft: there has been very little (apart from a small bout of tomatoes being thrown at the village hall! However, once harvested this naturally came to an end), education about not kicking the trees down or snapping plants helps overcome this, and getting the culprits involved in the project to foster a sense of ownership and care for the project.



With help from ESC, the project/group even featured on ITV news who interviewed Clare Matterson on site, in a feature on the grant programme field to fork.

Pete rounded his presentation up with restating that they were happy that they were able to improve the biodiversity in the village in both gardens (with the 20%) and the community with the garden. The sense of community cohesion was great. They also aspire to look at those in need around the village that the food produced could help.

This helped both his and the others' physical and mental health, being in fresh air with the community doing a worthwhile cause!

So, look after your garden, and it will look after you.



### Ashley Lydbrook, Groundwork East

A key point emphasised early on by Ashley was that knowledge is vital – people need the knowledge and confidence around nutritional value of food and how to prepare it and cook it into healthy meals that contribute towards a balanced diet, if they are to make effective use of the produce produced.



Ashley pointed out that biodiversity needs more emphasis too, with part of the role of community gardening being to boost nature in the community.

This has societal benefits: improved biodiversity, with supply chain issues there is increased food security (these issues will only get worse with climate change and resulting issues), Ashley stressed that in these turbulent times, the work that Groundwork East do is helping to “arm people with knowledge” to be able to skill up and feed themselves as the challenges around supply of food become ever more acute.

Funding was secured by Groundwork from National Lottery for 6 Community Food Growing Hubs (CFGH) across Luton and Bedfordshire, where hub is stressed as this is primarily a hub for people to collect and share knowledge with food produced as almost a by-product/focal point. These projects run for 3 years and after this is over, they are handed over to the community. Over the 6 sites they have had 434 volunteers!



Help is available from Groundwork East in the forms of:

- Training
- Funding advice
- Partnership working
- Landscaping services
- Deliver a programme on site for a community
- Sustainable business services
- Adult learning programmes

They also do employment teams, getting people who are out of work involved in the delivery of community projects to help upskill them and help with their getting back into employment.

### Andy Jolliffe, East Suffolk Council

Field to Fork launched in the summer of 2022 thanks to funding from the shared prosperity fund. The scheme is part of ESC's campaign Ease the Squeeze.

This project has two elements:

1. Small grant schemes
2. Grow your own starter kits

And it has two main aims:

1. more *people* growing produce
2. and more *produce* being produced





Andy and colleagues conducted site visits to emerging projects to try and ascertain what the needs were for each project. This included visiting Wild About Campsea, as well as Pathways Care Farm, Deben Community Farm, and Rendlesham Community Allotments.

It became clear that there was no universal need, with each project needed different things. Therefore, the scheme was set up and as long as the two aims were being met – ESC were happy for the differing needs to be met flexibly.

Through the Small Grant scheme, 15 recipients received a share of £23,000 of small grants. These recipients all varied ranging from village halls, schools to adults and children with special learning needs.

- The grow your own starter kits included:
  - o Recycled windowsill planters
  - o Organic cotton growing bag
  - o Seeds
  - o Small hand tools
  - o Instructions
  - o (Garish) Gardening gloves (which served as conversation starters too)
  - o Compost pellets



The kits retailed at around £40, so it was vital that these kits went to the right people, where perhaps they did not have £40 spare so that it would go to healthy homegrown produce. With help from the databases that ESC hold, they met the challenge of distribution of the kits by targeting them at the most deprived areas in the district – down to the level of particular roads in a village.

This was supposed to run in two phases with phase 1 as schools and 2 as community spaces, however with so much uptake from the schools, all of the kits were distributed through phase 1.

They started with 1000 kits and then later added another 600, with 28 schools visited during pick up and drop off times.

In the instructions, registration was encouraged, this would help show the progress.

This started in March and April and thus far there haven't been any negative comments about the project relayed to Andrew. In total they estimate that around 7000 people had access to these kits which meant that per person of engagement it cost just £2!

Monthly newsletters help spread the news of the project and also help raise awareness of other community projects e.g., Wild about Campsea.





Next steps: there is £15k left of the funding with an additional £26k for 2024. We have the opportunity to shape how this is used, so Andy welcomed any suggestions on how this can be utilised/project be improved.

So if you have ideas as to where you think the gaps in provision are, and how ESC should focus the use of the remaining funding, your feedback will be very much welcomed and can be channelled to Andy via [andrew.jolliffe@eastsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.jolliffe@eastsuffolk.gov.uk)

### Q&A chaired by Jane Healey

- Could field to fork project be distributed via social supermarkets?
  - o Yes, information gets sent out next month and in autumn about this
- Does Field to Fork get feedback from recipients?
  - o Yes and will be sought again as the growing seasons and harvests come round again
- What seeds were provided in the kits?
  - o Tomatoes, multi-coloured radishes, mixed leaf lettuce and basil
  - o Recipes were also provided by Pathways Care Farm, e.g., Basil pesto with roasted radish and potatoes
- Are these kits reusable or just for one year?
  - o Tools and other elements last so for next year there may be more starter kits but the potential for a booster/top-up kit for those that already had the starter
- A member of the audience made the observation that in their community a concerned wife reached out for this kit for her husband who was coping with depression, and that this transformed his life – thank you Field to Fork!
- How do Groundwork East organise the skills with cooking?
  - o There are funds for a site to be able to run the course
  - o Courses last 6-8 weeks which takes the people through the process of growing, harvesting and the cooking- each session lasting 1.5-2 hours
  - o 2-3 simple recipes are shown (including a main meal, drink, snack and a pudding)
  - o These are run on a weekdays in work hours as the people on the courses are often retired or out of work
- The Instagram cloud gardener with the insta tag/name: 'cloudgardeneruk' was mentioned who grows food from his 18<sup>th</sup> floor balcony in Manchester. His account follows his mental health journey and how this gardening project has helped with some of these issues. He also shows how to use differing/unusual spaces for the purposes of gardening. He was described as a 'mini-scientist' due to inspecting the different bugs and insects that were present in his high rise balcony



- East Suffolk has very differing environments from very rural to Lowestoft, therefore these projects need to be able to be accessible to a range of differing situations
- Pete explained how when Field to Forks project was involved with Wild about Campsea they spent the grant money on an Open Day which focused on people making their own wooden planters which they would be able to take home. Vegetable soup was also being made – however the planters seemed to overpower this activity. In spite of this, a batch of soup was made and able to be sampled all around.



## Other funding opportunities

Current funding opportunities for communities in Suffolk driving projects that have a positive environmental impact are collated here [Grants and Funding Opportunities – Green Suffolk](#)

More information on funding may be found with:

- Groundwork East [Apply for a grant - Groundwork](#)
- National Lottery Community Fund [National Lottery Awards for All England | The National Lottery Community Fund \(tnlcommunityfund.org.uk\)](#)
- Axter Community Fund [The Axter Climate & Community Fund - Suffolk Community Foundation \(suffolkcf.org.uk\)](#)
- Suffolk Giving Fund [Suffolk Giving Fund and private funds - Suffolk Community Foundation \(suffolkcf.org.uk\)](#)
- Tesco Community Fund [Apply for a grant – Tesco Community Grants.](#)

## Useful links for further help and guidance

- **Community gardens and farms include:**
  - Fork to Fork Lowestoft [Lowestoft Fork To Fork | Lowestoft | Facebook](#)
  - Oak Tree Community farm, Rushmere St Andrew [Home - The Oak Tree Community Farm \(the-oak-tree.co.uk\)](#)
  - Women Like Me Lowestoft and Southwold [Women-Like-Me](#)
- **Community care farms:**
  - Deben Community Farm, Melton [Home \(debencommunityfarm.co.uk\)](#)
  - Paws for thought [Paws for Thought Therapy | Care Farm for Children & Teenagers](#)
  - Pathways Care Farm [Pathways Care Farm \(pathways-care-farm.org.uk\)](#)
  - Potsford Farm [Accredited Care Farm - Potsford Farm](#)
  - Sunflower Community Care Farm [Home \(thesunflowercommunitycarefarm.org.uk\)](#)





- **Community Fridges** – for sharing food resources within the community: [Community Fridge Network \(hubbub.org.uk\)](#) local examples include Saxmundham [SAX Community Fridge | Facebook](#) and Lowestoft [Lowestoft Community Fridge — Food Savvy](#) whilst Woodbridge have a Community Pantry [The Woodbridge Little Free Pantry is ready to open! - Network Suffolk](#)
- **Coronation Gardens** – provide tips and advice ranging from beginners to experts on growing food in gardens [About Us | Coronation Gardens \(mycoronationgarden.org\)](#)
- **FareShare** – working with charities to redistribute surplus food to where it is needed: [FareShare | Fighting hunger, tackling food waste in the UK](#)
- **Food Co-ops Toolkit** – more and more communities are setting up food co-ops so they can get good food at an affordable price and have more control over where their food comes from : [Food Co-ops toolkit | Sustain \(sustainweb.org\)](#)
- **Greener Growth** – a Suffolk based CIC who provide consultation, building, renovating and maintenance services for businesses, schools, prisons and community groups. Their focus is on enhancing biodiversity alongside therapeutic production of food. [Greener Growth - Home](#)
- **Groups and networks based on gardening and food growing:**
  - Saxmundham [Saxmundham gardening group | Facebook](#),
  - Lowestoft [ALLOTMENT,GARDEN & VEGETABLE GROWERS, NORWICH - GREAT YARMOUTH - LOWESTOFT | Facebook](#), [Lowestoft Gardening Group | Facebook](#)
  - Southwold [Southwold and Reydon Gardeners | Facebook](#)
- **Groundwork East** – this page has some tips and tricks for growing food at home with some YouTube tutorials [Groundwork near me - Groundwork](#)
- **Incredible Edible** – network on how to live more sustainably by growing your own food [Incredible Edible – If you eat, you're in](#)
- **Royal Horticultural society** – large hub of information and advice on other networks and all things gardening, including:
  - [\(Community gardening / RHS Gardening\)](#)
  - Saxmundham Horticultural Society- [Get involved with the RHS / RHS Gardening](#)
  - Ufford Gardening Club- [Ufford Gardening Club](#)
  - Wickham Market District Garden Club- [Wickham Market & District Gardening Club \(wmgardenclub.org.uk\)](#)
- **Soil Association** – for information about soils and organics [Soil Association](#)



- **Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service** – for information about wildlife in Suffolk [front | Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service \(suffolkbis.org.uk\)](http://suffolkbis.org.uk)
- **Suffolk Master Composters** – a network of green fingered volunteers who provide advice and troubleshooting on composting [Master Composters - Suffolk Recycling](#)
- **Suffolk Observatory** – a goldmine of local data to evidence the need for local campaigns and action [Suffolk Observatory – Welcome to the Suffolk Observatory](#)
- **Transition Network** – what Transition is (a global movement to aid the transition to low carbon, resilient, socially just society), why and how to do it: [Transition Network | Transition Towns](#) Transition Woodbridge is a superb local example [Transition Woodbridge – Part of the Transition Towns Network](#)
- **Woodland Trust and Kew** – tips on increasing biodiversity in your garden [How To Increase Biodiversity In Your Garden - Woodland Trust - Woodland Trust](#) & [Top tips for a biodiverse garden | Kew](#)

## Acknowledgements



We wish to thank our speakers Andy Jolliffe, Ashley Lydbrook, Clare Matterson, and Peter Marett for freely giving their time and imparting their knowledge and engaging with the forum.

Thank you too to all the stallholders (Deben Community Farm, Greenprint Forum, Groundwork East, and Suffolk Society of Allotment & Leisure Gardeners) for engaging with and informing attendees.

Thanks to Campsea Ashe Parish Council for providing the venue and Wild About Campsea for the hospitality.

And of course we wish to thank all who attended for contributing their questions, participating in the group discussion to share their own insights and learning. It was encouraging to hear of the depth and breadth of action already taking place in the various communities represented by attendees and we look forward to ongoing opportunities to engage and share learning through our wider network.



#### Appendix one – organisations with representatives in attendance





- **Beccles Town Council**
- **Campsea Ashe Parish Council**
- **Charsfield Parish Council**
- **Deben Community Farm** [Home \(debencommunityfarm.co.uk\)](http://debencommunityfarm.co.uk)
- **East Suffolk Council** (present were Andy Jolliffe, Communities Officer; Daniel Wareing, Environmental Sustainability Officer; Sorcha Barnes, Climate Change & Environmental Sustainability Intern; and Cllr Sally Noble, Ward Member for Ward of Wickham Market)
- **Greener Peasenhall** [A Greener Peasenhall & Sibton – action for a better environment locally \(home.blog\)](#)
- **Greener Waldringfield** [A Greener Waldringfield](#)
- **Greenprint Forum Steering Group** (present were Betsy Reid, Daniel Wareing, Jane Healey, Laurence Moss, and Susan Harvey) [Greenprint Steering Group » East Suffolk Council](#)
- **Groundwork East** [East of England - Groundwork](#)
- **Hadleigh Environmental Action Team Gallows Hill Allotments**
- **Marlesford Community Centre** [Community Centre \(suffolk.cloud\)](#)
- **Peasenhall Allotment Society**
- **Pettistree Parish Council**
- **Royal Horticultural Society** [Royal Horticultural Society](#)
- **Saxmundham Town Council** [Saxmundham Green Team - Saxmundham](#)
- **Suffolk Climate Change Partnership** [Suffolk Climate Change Partnership – Green Suffolk](#)
- **Suffolk Master Composters** [Master Composters - Suffolk Recycling](#)



- **Suffolk Society of Allotment & Leisure Gardeners** [Home \(suffolkallotments.org.uk\)](http://suffolkallotments.org.uk)
- **The Erasmus Foundation** [Erasmus Foundation Spiritual Teaching and Healing Centre \(erasmus-foundation.org\)](http://erasmus-foundation.org)
- **Transition Woodbridge** [Transition Woodbridge – Part of the Transition Towns Network](#)
- **Trimley Allotments**
- **Trimley St Mary Parish Council**
- **Waldringfield Gardeners** [Waldringfield Gardeners \(greenerwaldringfield.org\)](http://greenerwaldringfield.org)
- **Wickham Market Parish Council**
- **Wild About Campsea** [Wild About Campsea \(@wildaboutcampsea\) • Instagram photos and videos / WAC-brochure-070721.pdf \(onesuffolk.net\)](#)
- **Yoxford Parish Council**

